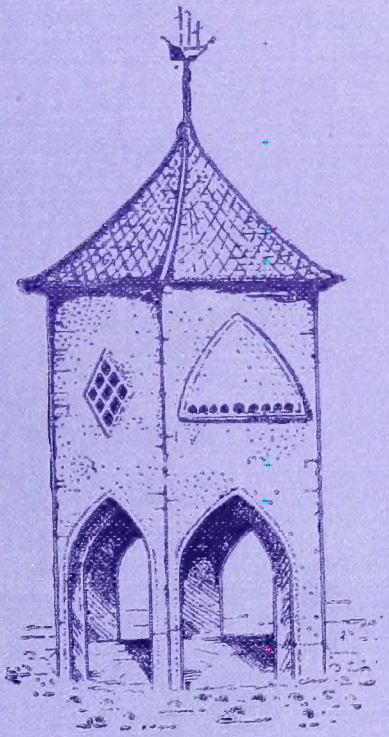
A BOOK OF DOVECOTES

By A. O. Cooke



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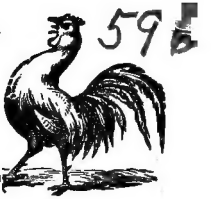

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A BOOK OF DOVECOTES

SOUTH BANTASKINE, FALKIRK

A BOOK OF DOVECOTES

BY ARTHUR O. COOKE
AUTHOR OF "THE FOREST OF DEAN"

T. N. FOULIS, PUBLISHER
LONDON, EDINBURGH, & BOSTON

This work is published by

T. N. FOULIS

LONDON: 91 Great Russell Street, W.C.

EDINBURGH: 15 Frederick Street

BOSTON: 15 Ashburton Place

(*Le Roy Phillips, Agent*)

And may also be ordered through the following agencies, where the work may be examined

AUSTRALASIA: The Oxford University Press, Cathedral Buildings, 205 Flinders Lane, Melbourne

CANADA: W. C. Bell, 25 Richmond Street West, Toronto

DENMARK: Aaboulevard 28, Copenhagen

(*Nørrebros Boghandel*)

Published in November
Nineteen Hundred and
Twenty

SF
472
C172

E 6500

Printed in Scotland by
R. & R. CLARK, LTD. *Edinburgh.*

grey-wing'd doves
Around the mossy dovecotes fly.

WILLIAM BARNES.

PREFACE

FOR one apology at least the author of *A Book of Dovecotes* has no need; he is not called upon to find excuses for producing "yet another volume" on the subject chosen for his pen. No such work has yet been published, and, with the exception of one or two magazine articles, none of them of very recent date, the enquirer must turn to the Transactions or Proceedings of certain local antiquarian societies; publications which, accurate, interesting, and valuable as their contents may be, are not too readily accessible to the general reader. Moreover, such sources of information cover less than half-a-dozen English counties.

What is the special interest of the subject? "Are not all dovecotes pretty much alike?" it may be asked. The answer to this question is emphatically "No." It would be difficult to find two dovecotes quite identical in every detail, architectural style, shape, size, design of doorway, means of entrance for the inmates, number and arrangement of the nests. For these old structures, built in field or fold-yard, park or garden, date from long ago. They were designed and built by craftsmen gifted with

imagination, who, though they worked to some extent upon a pattern, loved to leave their individual mark upon the thing they fashioned with their hands.

Our British dovecotes, too, are growing fewer every year. Many have vanished altogether, some by wanton demolition, others by neglect. The time has surely come at which to chronicle a few of those that still remain; to draw attention to their frequent beauty; call to mind the interest which attaches to them; plead for their more careful preservation, and —not altogether needlessly—make clear the reason why they came to occupy their places in our land.

Something personal is due from the writer; on one hand to the reader of this volume, on the other to the many who have lent their aid in its production. Born in Herefordshire, a county in which dovecotes are both numerous and beautiful, I had often felt surprise and disappointment at the lack of printed information regarding these delightful buildings; and I have at length ventured to attempt something, however little and however imperfectly, which

may perhaps serve, in legal phrase, to "open the case."

The book is very far from being exhaustive; many counties have perforce been left entirely untouched, though an effort has been made to deal with most districts of England, and to some extent with Scotland and Wales. The story of the Roman *columbarium*, as of the French *colombier*, has been lightly sketched; so also with the laws concerning dovecotes, both in Britain and in France. What is here offered is, in short, a *hors-d'œuvre* rather than a serious course, far less a solid meal.

So much as an apology for imperfections; gratitude remains to be expressed. A certain number of the dovecotes marshalled for inspection in the following pages are well known to me, some being old familiar friends. For a knowledge of others I am largely indebted to the late Chancellor Ferguson's "Pigeon-Houses in Cumberland," a paper published in the *Transactions* of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archæological Society, vol. ix., 1887–88; to "The Dovecotes of Worcestershire," an exhaustive, de-

lightful, and well illustrated account by the Honourable Mrs. Berkeley, printed in the *Reports and Papers* of the Architectural Societies, vol. xxviii., 1905–6; to articles by Alfred Watkins, Esq., J.P., who has dealt with Herefordshire and other dovecotes in the *Transactions* of the Woolhope Naturalists' Field Club for 1890, and elsewhere; and to the careful and detailed accounts of Northamptonshire examples by Major C. A. Markham, now appearing from time to time in *Northamptonshire Notes and Queries*. To the two last-named gentlemen, as also to Mr. H. E. Forrest of Shrewsbury, I owe much for kindly help in other ways.

But personal knowledge, even with this aid, would have gone but a short way to fill the present volume. Doubtless the ideal method for the dovecote-hunter is to sling a rucksack on his shoulder, take a walking-stick, a camera, and thick-soled boots, and go a-foot through all the by-ways of the land in quest of his peculiar prey. Failing the possibility of such a tempting course, I am indebted to all those who, upon receipt of a portentous list of ques-

tions, spared no pains to give the details of some dovecote which they either owned or knew. In a few cases only was the information asked for tacitly refused.

All over Britain, from Caithness to Cornwall, there have risen up to help me those who, total strangers when the post presented at their heads a blunderbuss of questions, now, in many cases, seem to occupy the place of kindly friends, so heartily have they assisted, and so generous the encouragement and interest which they offered to the work. Clergy have left their studies, farmers snatched an hour from the busy fields of spring; landowners, ladies—terms no doubt at times synonymous, —with army officers and naval men, have gone out into yard or field or garden, there to photograph or sketch, to measure walls and windows, note the number and the shape of nest-holes, so that they might send so clear and full a verbal picture of their dovecote that it seemed to stand before my eyes. To name a few would be invidious, and to speak of all impossible. They must be fully conscious of the lavish measure of their kindness to a stranger,

and, I hope, will not feel altogether unrewarded by the very grateful thanks he offers to them here.

ARTHUR O. COOKE.

38 DUBLIN STREET,
EDINBURGH, *May* 1920.

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CHAPTER ONE
THE ROMAN COLUMBARIUM

CHAPTER ONE
THE ROMAN COLUMBARIUM

In a book so limited in size and scope as the present volume, a learned disquisition on the pigeon, on its place in former ages and in many lands, with an excursus on the subject of its prehistoric ancestry, will hardly be expected, and assuredly will not be given. We are concerned chiefly with the dovecotes of England and Scotland; and though some enthusiastic owner of an ancient pigeon-house may claim that it descends from Saxon times, it will hardly be seriously disputed that the keeping of pigeons in Great Britain, with the construction of dovecotes in which to house them, had its beginning in, and came from, although indirectly, Rome. A word or two on Roman pigeon-keeping, then, will not be altogether out of place; and happily our knowledge of the subject has its bases soundly fixed on such reliable authorities as Pliny the Elder and Varro, with some useful support from Columella.

Pliny, after noticing the fidelity and combativeness of the dove, reminds us that dur-

ing the siege of Mutina, Decimus Brutus despatched to the Consuls a message fastened to the foot of a pigeon; the modern method, it may here be mentioned, is to tie the letter underneath a wing. The use of pigeons as letter-carriers during the siege of Paris in 1870 may well be known to many who are unaware that the Germans attempted to destroy such messengers by means of hawks. Pigeons, too, played their part as message-bearers in the recent war.

Pliny goes on to speak of the "mania" for pigeons, which, in his day, existed to such an extent in Rome that veritable "towns" were sometimes built upon the roofs of houses for their use; and finally sets down, no doubt in all good faith, a few beliefs which, current in his time, will hardly survive collision with modern science. He states, for example, that if the body of a *tinnunculus*—by which Cuvier believed him to have meant the kestrel—were buried underneath each corner of the pigeon-house, its occupants would not desert the place. He also speaks of a peculiar venom in the teeth of human beings, which not only tar-

nished the brightness of metal mirrors, but proved fatal to young unfledged pigeons, which we now call "squabs." Allusion is also made to the special fondness of pigeons for the mixed grain called by the Romans *farrago*, a word which has descended to us with a different sense.

Much interesting information as to Roman pigeon-keeping will be found in the proper section of Varro's *Rerum Rusticarum*. Two different breeds were chiefly kept. One was the wild rock pigeon, *agreste*, of a mixed or dappled colour; shy in its habits, keeping to house gables or high towers, feeding in the distant fields. The other, *clementius*, was a white bird; very common, and quite tame enough to feed about the doorstep, but not greatly in request with pigeon-keepers, for the reason that its snowy plumage made it a conspicuous prey for hawks. The birds most largely bred for table were a cross (*miscellum*) of these two, and were usually housed in what was sometimes called a *peristeron* or *peristerotrophion*, which might hold as many as five thousand birds.

The Roman *columbarium* was usually round, the vaulted roof being generally of stone, though tiles were sometimes used. The entrance was small, and the windows either latticed or covered with a double trellis to ensure the birds against the invasion of snakes and other vermin. The interior surface of the walls was covered with a smoothly worked cement made from ground marble, while the outer face immediately around the windows was often similarly treated, so that no foothold might be offered to small climbing animals. The nest-holes, very similar to those that we may see to-day in many an English dovecote, lined the walls from floor to roof; the entrance to each being only large enough to admit the bird, but the whole expanding inwards to the breadth of a foot. Sometimes the nests appear to have been circular, and in some instances they were constructed of a kind of porcelain. Before each row of nests there was a shelf eight inches broad, to serve as an alighting-place and promenade.

There was one detail in the construction of a Roman pigeon-house which, though it

may possibly have found its way to France, seems never to have reached Britain. This was an arrangement by which the birds could be fed from the exterior of the house through an elaborate system of pipes and troughs. The troughs were placed all round the tiers of nest-holes, while the pipes communicating with them had their orifice outside the walls. The most perfect nicety of adjustment must have been required, since the pipes were called on to convey, not smoothly flowing water, but a great variety of grain, such as peas, beans, millet, refuse wheat, and vetches. It may perhaps be fairly doubted whether so complicated an arrangement was in very general use.

Varro seems to recommend that water, not only for drinking but for washing purposes, should flow into the house, and one authority suggests the provision of a fairly large bathing-basin in the centre of the floor, a hint we shall in due course find followed in an ancient English dovecote. Columella, on the contrary, favoured the use of small drinking-vessels which would admit the pigeon's head and neck

alone, on the ground that bathing was bad for the eggs on which hen birds might be sitting. Pigeons being very cleanly birds the keeper of the columbarium was to sweep the house out several times a month, and that for the additional reason that the manure yielded was of the highest quality. The present use of this manure as a tanning agent for certain classes of skins is not alluded to.

Varro goes on to speak of the desirability of the window or windows admitting plenty of sunlight, and of the necessity of a netted-off chamber for the sitting hens; also that these should have a due amount of exercise and air, lest, "saddened by the slavery of continued confinement," they might lose their health.

It seems that the occupants of a pigeon-house were expected to draw others of their kind to swell the owner's colony; for the pigeon-keeper is reminded that if his birds are anointed with myrrh, or if a little cummin or old wine be added to their usual food, the pigeons of the neighbourhood, attracted by the sweetness of their breath, would follow them. This recipe, or something very like it,

long survived, and even crossed the sea to us. In John Moore's *Columbarium, or the Pigeon House*, first published in 1735, occurs the following passage:

"Being thus entered on the head of diet, it leads us necessarily to consider a certain composition called by the fanciers a Salt Cat, so named, I suppose, from a certain fabulous oral tradition of baking a cat . . . with cummin seed, and some other ingredients, as a decoy for your neighbour's pigeons; this, though handed down by some authors as the only method for this purpose, is generally laughed at by the gentlemen of the fancy, and never practised."

Moore then gives the ingredients of this mixture, which include sand, lime rubble, with cummin seed and saltpetre, both the last-named items being much relished by pigeons. Whether, however, the genuine "salt cat" was always altogether absent from the composition seems doubtful. In the accounts of Jesus College, Cambridge, for the year 1651-2 may be read the following suggestive entry:

"For a roasted dog and comin seed, 00 : 02 : 00 ;"

while a boiled goat's head forms a prominent feature of another prescription for the same purpose.

It is melancholy to observe that the immorality of any attempt to "decoy your neighbour's pigeons" to your own dovecote does not seem to occur to either Roman or British writer.

Hawks were a frequent menace to the pigeons of Rome. A method of snaring them was to take two twigs, lime them, and bend them towards each other till they formed an arch, below which could be placed as bait the carcass of some favourite prey.

Young birds intended for speedy fattening were separated from their elders as soon as covered with down. They were then fed, or rather "crammed," to use the modern poultry-keeper's phrase, with white bread already half chewed by men specially hired for the work. These men were highly paid, as one would fancy they deserved to be; indeed it was a question with experts whether the game was worth the candle, the wages of the chewers eating up the extra value of the squabs.

Young pigeons are, as will be known to many, fed by their parents upon half-digested food.

The English farmer's wife who wishes to fatten quickly a clutch of young ducklings is careful to give them no opportunity of swimming, but confines them in a narrow pen and doles out water only with their food. The Roman pigeon-keeper had more drastic methods with his squabs; he broke their legs, to do away with all excess of exercise. Columella, almost as though he had an eye upon the modern British reader and inspectors of the S.P.C.A., hastens to add that the pain caused by the operation disappeared in two, or at the most three days. It may have been so; but one cannot help recalling the remark of Sydney Smith, who, when a man recounted how he had been bitten without any provocation by a dog, replied, while sympathising, that he "would have liked to have the dog's account of the affair."

But Roman pigeons were not kept exclusively for satisfaction of the grosser and material appetites. There are signs of a commencement of a "fancy," for people were in the habit of taking favourite birds with them to the

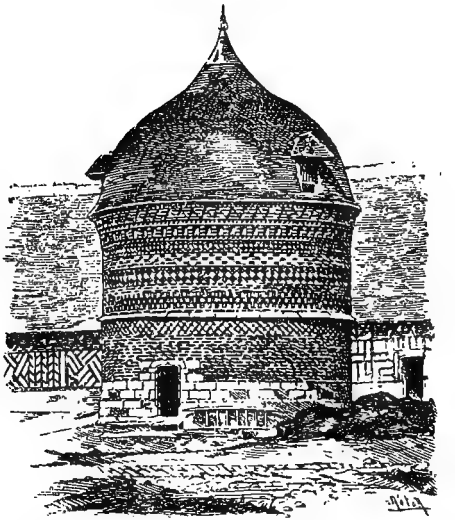
theatre, which, it must be remembered, was open to the sky, and there releasing them, that they might show their "homing" powers.

The prices sometimes asked and paid for pigeons also points to this. For a handsome pair of well-bred birds, free from all blemish, and of a popular colour or mixture of colours, as much as two hundred sesterces—about thirty shillings—was a common price; even a thousand sesterces was occasionally demanded, and a case is cited where sixteen hundred had been offered and refused. Persons took up pigeon-breeding as a trade or an amusement, or a blend of both, and might possess a house, appliances, and birds to the value of one hundred thousand sesterces, say eight hundred pounds. Varro, in one of those imaginary conversations in which he liked to impart his agricultural knowledge, strongly advises a friend to master in Rome the technicalities of the business, as he there would have before him many examples, and might then establish his breeding-place in the country. He goes on to offer the truly alluring return of fifty per cent *per diem!* but, unfortunately, this rosy prospect is not sup-

ported by any statement of figures likely to pass the scrutiny of a modern accountant.

Having thus given a view of *columbaria* as they were in ancient Rome, we move north-westward; but, before entering Britain, it is well to make a halt in France. For not only is it practically certain that the first builders of the dovecote in England were the Normans; but in France we find examples which, while very similar in some respects to those of Britain, yet display in many instances a richness of ornament which we cannot equal. Many a French dovecote is, as compared to those of our own country, what such Renaissance chateaux as Blois, Chenonceaux, and Azay-le-Rideau are to the rugged ruins of English castle keeps. At least a few French dovecotes therefore claim to be described, together with some mention of the laws concerning them.

CHAPTER TWO
THE FRENCH COLOMBIER



COLOMBIER DU MANOIR D'ANGO À VARENGEVILLE (SEINE-INFÉRIEURE), XVI^e SIÈCLE

From *Manuel d'archéologie française*

CHAPTER TWO
THE FRENCH COLOMBIER

It does not appear that any restrictions governed the possession of a Roman *columbarium*; but, leaving Italy for France, we come to legislation on the subject—legislation which was at once intricate and oppressive in its nature, but upon which we, whose withers are unwrung, can look back with interest. Varro remarks that the feeding of pigeons was not a matter of great cost, the birds enjoying freedom and "fending" for themselves during some ten months out of twelve. That was, and still is, perfectly true, so far as the birds' owners were concerned; but it is to be remembered that the pigeons picked up their living largely at the cost of others, feeding in the cultivated fields, and doing great damage to the crops. This was the case in medieval France, as it had been in the vicinity of Rome; and the depredations of a great man's pigeons may be well included in that list of wrongs from which the peasantry of France had suffered through the centuries, and as an item by no

means negligible among the many causes of the Revolution.

For in France the right to erect and maintain a *colombier* was rigidly restricted; as in England it was a privilege long confined to the lord of a manor, so across the Channel it was the exclusive right of three classes of landed proprietors—*grands justiciers, seigneurs de fief*, and *seigneurs de censive*. This is hardly the place in which to explain at length the distinctions between these three classes, but it is of interest to note that, excepting in Brittany, there was no distinction with regard to birth; the right belonged to any member of one of the above-named classes, whether he were of the *noblesse* or a mere *roturier*. But it is doubtful whether this would be any great consolation to the peasant, who, viewing the havoc wrought among his crops by the lord's birds, would probably fail to observe any serious difference between the appetites of pigeons kept by a gentleman of ancient lineage, and of those whose owner came of humble stock.

The privilege in question applied merely to a *colombier à pied*—that is, to a substantial

building with foundations firmly planted in the ground, and with its nests, called *boulins*, covering the interior of the walls from floor to roof. The law did not concern itself with the mere *fuie* or *volière*, both of which were of the nature of the wooden structures often seen attached to English stable-walls and gable-ends.

Standing apparently on a somewhat debatable ground between these two extremes was the *colombier sur piliers*, built upon stone pillars, or sometimes on wooden posts. Generally such a structure was held to be exempt from restrictions, but in Brittany, as also in Touraine, it ranked as a *colombier à pied*.

Too numerous to be mentioned are the many local variations of this general law. In some districts a member of the privileged orders could, were he of the *noblesse*, erect his dovecote with no questions asked; as a *roturier* he must first obtain permission from authority. The evil of numerous dovecotes was not long in being felt; and from time to time various measures were taken to minimise the wrong. In some parts of France a dovecote could not be maintained, even by those

qualified as above, unless its owner possessed at least fifty *arpents* of land. Other steps in the same direction regulated the number of nest-holes permitted, proportioning them to the size of the domain; called for proofs of immemorial possession, or for the production of good title-deeds; or insisted that the dovecote should stand in the centre of its owner's land, in order that his crops should be the first to feel the pinch. But even these ameliorations of an undoubted wrong failed to cure the evil, and in 1789 all France's dovecotes shared —figuratively speaking—in the general fall. But happily their fabric, in some cases, still survives, and a few specially beautiful or interesting examples call for notice.

It is hardly necessary to say that, during the days in which the dovecote flourished undisturbed in France, it was often the property of some ecclesiastical establishment—abbey, or priory, or a dependency of such; and it is in the neighbourhood of these that we shall look, not unsuccessfully, for some of the choicest surviving examples.

The French dovecote was frequently white-

washed externally, with a view to making it conspicuous to its inmates on their homeward flight. Charles Waterton, who usually knew what he was talking about, says that this practice was forbidden in England in his father's time, as being likely to attract a neighbour's birds.

The argument seems hardly sound; but certainly a whitewashed English dovecote is not often seen.

It is in France that we first hear of, and may often find, an important adjunct of the dovecote which seems not to have been generally in use in Rome. This was the *potence*, a piece of mechanism used for gaining easy access to the upper tiers of nests. The vital portion was a massive beam or *arbre*, secured in an upright position in the centre of the dovecote by being pivoted into socket-holes placed in the floor and roof respectively. In these socket-holes the beam revolved freely at a touch. Jutting horizontally from the beam were several arms, technically known as the *potences* or "gallows," though the term gradually came to mean the mechanism as a whole. These arms were not

in the same vertical plane, but placed in such a position with regard to each other that the ladder they supported had a gentle slope. This ladder, being at the ends farthest from the central beam, allowed a person standing on it to search the upper nests for the young birds. Without descending he could, by gripping the tiers of nests, cause the beam and ladder to revolve, and so move round the house.

Sometimes one ladder only was employed; but not infrequently the arms projected on either side of the beam, each end carrying a ladder. This seems a questionable advantage; it allowed two persons to work together, but unless their rate of progress coincided the time saved must have been small.

It is easily understood that a potence was most useful in a circular or octagonal dovecote, where the ladder would, as it revolved, be equidistant from the walls at every point. In a square dovecote it would be of much less service, giving access indeed to nests in the middle of each wall, but leaving those placed in and near the corners out of reach. Yet, in some cases in England, and quite frequently

in Scotland, we may find a potence placed in a square pigeon-house.

Sometimes, especially in Auvergne, the dovecote was constructed in the dwelling-house to which it was attached. An example occurs at Montpazier, in the department of Dordogne, where a gable is pierced by a series of entrance-holes for the birds. A similar arrangement is found in many English houses, more especially in Yorkshire.

Some of the earliest of French dovecotes, massive circular buildings resembling the Roman *columbarium* in their general form, had very little actual roof, a large part of the dome being open to the sky. This practice does not seem to have been followed later than the fourteenth century. Subsequent erections, many built about the sixteenth century, were either round, octagonal or square. The dovecote at St. Ouen, Rouen, was cruciform; a very unusual shape, of which a fine example was formerly extant in England. In cases where the whole of the building was not devoted to pigeons the lower story was put to various uses; it might form an open shed, a fowl-house, stable, cellar,

entrance-gate—a frequent case in Auvergne. In one instance at least the pigeon-house surmounted a well.

French pigeon-keepers, like their Roman brethren, found their flocks extremely subject to attacks from vermin, and took various precautions to defeat the pest. Hence probably the form of dovecote known as the *colombier à pied*, already alluded to; raised on four, or sometimes eight pillars, there being nothing but an open shed or *hangar* underneath. Each pillar capital had a *larmier* or coping over it, which it was almost impossible for rats or similar invaders to surmount. Another method was to insert in the external surface of the walls a course or two of highly polished bricks or tiles, which formed all round the house a band too slippery for feet and claws to grip. This method, not without value as an ornament, was frequently employed in Languedoc. Still more common was the application of a broad string-course to the wall.

The circular dovecote was long popular, having among other advantages that of adapting itself to the introduction of the potence, so

convenient as a means of easy access to the nests.

Of such circular pigeon-houses a very fine example will be found in the courtyard of the Manoir d'Ango, at Varengeville, near Dieppe, not Varangéville, as it is sometimes incorrectly spelled, owing to confusion with a place so named in Meurthe-et-Moselle. The *manoir*, now a farm, is, like its former owner, worthy of a passing word.

Jean Ango, or Angot, who flourished exceedingly in the first half of the sixteenth century, came of a wealthy Dieppe family; they were shipowners of enterprise, and their flag flew in many quarters of the world. Jean was a man of means. During a progress made through Normandy by Francois I., he entertained that joyous monarch with a lavish hospitality; the reward was his appointment as the governor of Dieppe.

In his new office he was very zealous for the town. A Dieppe vessel having been attacked and pillaged by the Portuguese in time of peace, the warlike governor fitted out a fleet, sailed to and up the Tagus, and then spread such fear

in Lisbon that the King of Portugal was glad to compromise the matter by the payment of a large indemnity to the French town.

Ango paid dearly for the favour of the King of France, advancing heavy loans to his royal patron, and dying poor at last. His manor of Varengeville is now a farm; but—perhaps all we care about to-day—his dovecote stands.

It is a large circular building constructed entirely of black and red bricks, arranged in striking geometrical designs. The domed roof, terminating at the apex in a pointed pinnacle, is broken just above the eaves by three dormer windows.

Of smaller size, but even more ornate, is the dovecote at Boos, a village lying a few miles east of Rouen, on the Paris road. It is an octagonal building, surmounted by a pointed roof with a circular cornice. The material is mainly brick, stone being used for the cornice, the base, and the angles of the walls, as for the string-course half-way up.

Below this string-course each of the eight sides presents a surface of plain brick; above there is elaborate ornament. This is effected

by the use of bricks of several colours; they include red, in two distinct shades; with yellow, green and purple, the three last being glazed. These are arranged in great variety of pattern.

Further, there is a row of glazed tiles, on the white ground of each being a profile head or other ornament. This dovecote probably dates from the early portion of the sixteenth century, the house to which it is attached being older still.

In southern France it was necessary for the pigeon-keeper to take careful thought for his birds, particularly with regard to the icy blast of the mistral. They needed air and sun, but must be sheltered from the wind.

Consequently, in the neighbourhood of such places as Toulouse and Montauban, we find high dovecotes of square form, having a lean-to roof the slope of which was towards the south. The highest wall and the two side walls rise above this roof for several feet, and it thus forms a sheltered place on which the birds can sun themselves at ease. Small pinnacles may frequently be placed at each of the four corners, sometimes with projecting perches for the birds.

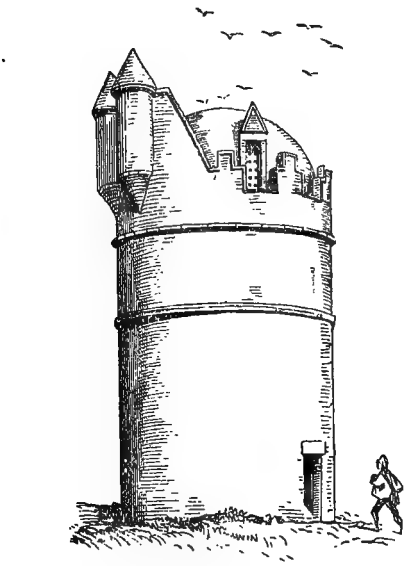
The entrance-holes are placed beneath the well-projecting eaves.

It is impossible to study a French dovecote of this shape, and note the similarity exhibited by many Scottish "doo-cots," without recalling the long and close intimacy which existed between France and Scotland—an intimacy from which England was altogether excluded. It is easy to believe that, at a time when Scots were constantly in France, and Frenchmen occasionally in Scotland, observation or suggestion would bring about the adoption in the northern kingdom of forms and methods current with its southern friend.

Also to be seen in southern France are dovecotes of a different plan. They are of brick and circular, with a domed roof, and two string-courses placed high up the walls. Such roof, if left unmodified, would give the pigeons no protection from the wind. To obviate this defect, upon the side from which the mistral blows, the wall has been continued well above the roof and carries three small turrets, which are not merely ornamental but afford additional shelter.

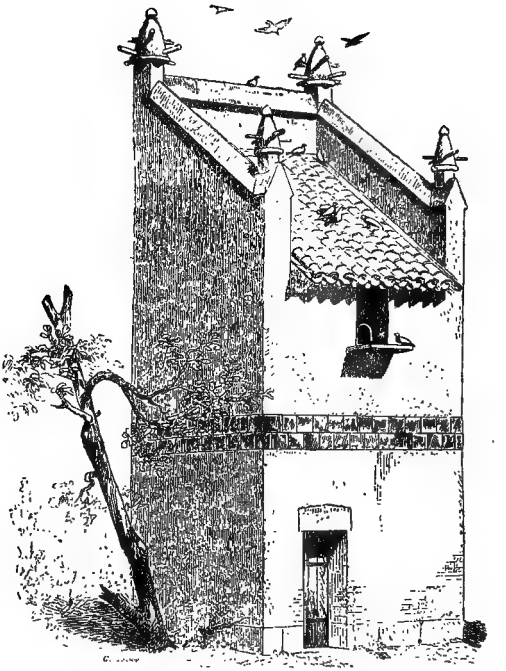
FRENCH COLOMBIER

Such then are some, though a few only, of the very interesting dovecotes once existing or still found in France. It is now time to give attention to those nearer home.



DOVECOTE OF SOUTHERN FRANCE

CHAPTER THREE
THE ENGLISH DOVECOTE



DOVECOTE OF SOUTHERN FRANCE

CHAPTER THREE
THE ENGLISH DOVECOTE

BEFORE going on to the main purpose of this book, the description, namely, of a few of the most interesting dovecotes still surviving in England, Wales, and Scotland, it will be well to spend a page or two in treating of them as a whole. It may be asked, for instance, why these buildings, formerly so common, have in many cases disappeared; why those still standing are, with some exceptions, silent and untenanted, or turned to uses other than the purpose which their builders had in view. If they were needed in old days, then why not now?

It will be neither jest nor paradox to say that dovecotes were in a great measure doomed when first the turnip and the swede were introduced to British agriculture, early in the eighteenth century. For these useful vegetables, with assistance later from oil-cake and other feeding-stuffs, solved a problem which had long baffled the British farmer; that of maintaining sheep and cattle through the win-

ter months. The agriculturist of Norman and much later days, not having these resources, had but one course to pursue. He fed his flocks and herds through spring and summer upon grass; then, when the grass grew scant in autumn, there was a universal slaughter, all save a few breeding animals being killed and salted down for winter food. November in Old German was called Slagtmonat, or slaughter month, the Anglo-Saxon equivalent being Blodmonath or blood-month. On pillars in Carlisle cathedral are seen carvings which display the various occupations of the months. That for December shows a man, a poleaxe, and an ox about to die.

With this elimination of fresh beef and mutton from the winter bill of fare, we understand how welcome would be any smaller creatures which would live through the lean months and yield a never-failing stock of appetising food. Such a place was filled to perfection by the pigeon, a bird needing little space for the accommodation of several hundreds; exceedingly prolific; and, moreover, capable of procuring its food over a wide range of country

and at little cost.

With the introduction of "roots" and the resulting possibility of winter-feeding stock, the need for dovecotes naturally decreased; while there gradually arose a more positive reason for their falling into desuetude. The peasant agriculturist of Norman days had seen, no doubt with pain, but certainly with little thought of remonstrance, still less of rebellion, the pigeons of the lord, the abbot, or the parson, battening daily on his scanty crops. It was a privilege which it would hardly occur to him to dispute; he looked upon it as the natural course of things that he should labour to raise crops from which the birds of his superiors took a heavy toll, and he was doubtless thankful for the little left for his own use.

But with the gradual disappearance of oppressive privileges these pacific sentiments would no longer obtain. The dovecote, whence there issued with the dawn hundreds of birds who found their living in the farmers' fields, would be among those objects upon which reformers turned their eyes. Nor had they far to look. We have it on the word of Samuel Hart-

lib, Milton's friend, that towards the middle of the seventeenth century the number of English dovecotes was estimated at twenty-six thousand. If we allow five hundred pairs of pigeons to each cote—a fairly modest computation, many dovecotes having upwards of one thousand nests—and then remember that a pair of pigeons will consume annually four bushels of corn, the enormous loss of grain to farmers will be seen.

It is to be understood that for many centuries the right to erect and maintain one of these structures was strictly limited. Those so favoured by the Norman laws were the lords of manors, a class which included not only a vast number of landowning laymen, but also abbots and other ecclesiastics, the parson of a parish being frequently among the number. As to this last-named class there will be something more to say, especially with reference to the kind of dovecote which they sometimes used.

This feudal privilege is generally stated to have been abolished during the reign of Elizabeth. It is certain that during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries there was a large ad-

dition to the number of our English dovecotes, many being built; but restrictions still existed till much later times. In 1577, for example, a tenant who had erected a dovecote on a royal manor was ordered by the Court of Exchequer to demolish it. Ten years later, in another case of the same kind, it was still held that none save the lord of the manor might build a dovecote; but two out of the three judges decided that there was no ground for prosecution before the Manor Court, the great man's only remedy being a civil action. This decision seems to have been reaffirmed in the days of James I., the lord of the manor's sole right to a dovecote being still expressly upheld. The law upon the point appears to have been still unchanged as late as the first quarter of the nineteenth century.

The dovecote introduced into this country by the Norman conquerors was of one universal type; a circular and very massive building, having walls three feet or even more in thickness, and a low-domed vaulted roof. This last was, at first, most often open in the centre, a round hole admitting not the pigeons only, but

both light and air. Inside, the nest-holes, well designed and accurately built, usually covered the entire surface of the walls.

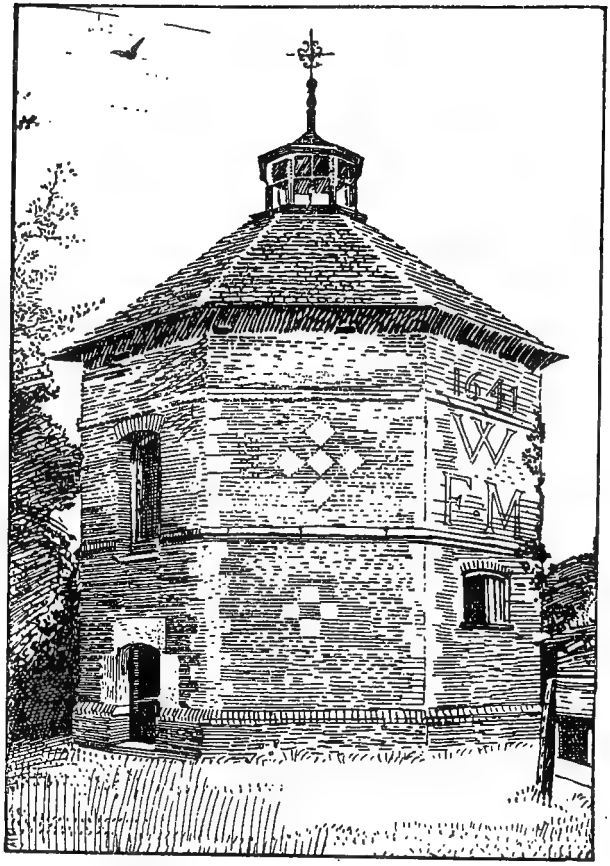
The "potence" we have seen in France, and are to find again in many English instances, as well as north of Tweed. But it was often absent from the earlier Norman specimens. The open centre to the roof would render difficult the placing of a socket for the upper pivot of the beam, and it is doubtful whether the alternative framework of powerful cross-timbers to support the upright was made use of until later times.

Gradually the circular dovecote was to some extent displaced by the lighter and more ornamental style of the octagonal form, or by the more easily built square or oblong pigeon-house. Six-sided dovecotes, though comparatively rare, are not unknown, while at least one English example was pentagonal. The walls, too, come to be less massive; windows, either in the walls or in the form of dormers in the roof were introduced; while a cupola, lantern, or "glover," crowned the whole.

Stone was of course the first material, brick

not coming into use till later days, and even then only in certain districts. But there were local substitutes. In Sussex chalk or rubble is not uncommon, while in Somersetshire use was sometimes made of clay or "cob," that ideal fabric for house-walls, which, cool in summer, warm in winter, is just now again enjoying its former high repute. And in the wooded counties of the March and Borderland of Wales, where "black-and-white" half-timbered houses, with the interstices of their wooden framing filled with "wattle and daub," add so much beauty to the countryside, half-timbered dovecotes of great elegance of form and often richly decorated may be seen.

It is to this Welsh Border country that the pilgrim who would go in quest of dovecotes shall forthwith be led.



MUCH MARCLE, HEREFORDSHIRE

CHAPTER FOUR
HEREFORDSHIRE

CHAPTER FOUR
HEREFORDSHIRE

THE reader may quite possibly feel some surprise at finding himself called on to commence a "survey" of our English dovecotes in a county which is both remote and little known. For this the author would perhaps venture to put forward grounds of personal predilection were he not provided with more satisfactory excuse. Herefordshire is not only rich in dovecotes of a great variety of age and form, but claims a further pre-eminence by possessing an example which is one of the oldest and finest in England, and which can point, in proof of its antiquity, not only to its architectural style, but to the quite indisputable date the builder graved upon its stone. It is to this most interesting of Herefordshire dovecotes that we will first turn.

More than one route offers by which to reach the secluded and extensive parish of Garway, lying on the south-west border of the county; but most to be recommended to the pedestrian, both for beauty of scenery and interest of association, is that which leads

him from Pontrilas station, twelve miles south of Hereford; follows the valley for about two miles to Kentchurch Court, where the adjoining church disputes with Monnington-on-Wye the claim to be the burial-place of Owen Glendower (Glyndwr, Mr. Bradley tells us it should be)—a claim which it is to be feared history can allow to neither place; and climbs the steep slope of Kentchurch deer-park, to emerge upon the breezy height of Garway Hill, an elevation of twelve hundred feet. Here, on clear days, the eye can wander from the Bristol Channel far up into Central Wales. Then, following the hill south, breast-high in bracken, and with soundless steps upon the sheep-cropped turf, we shall come presently to sunny Garway Rocks, and, by a winding road, with here and there a solitary farm at which to ask the way, arrive at last in sight of Garway church, which stands upon a slope above the brawling Monnow, here the county boundary.

The church itself might easily detain us long. Its tower, standing at an angle to the building, and connected with it only by a short passage; its curiously carved chancel arch; the

early English arcade which screens the south chapel; these, with still other features, bid us pause. But we must content ourselves with the knowledge that, originally a preceptory of the Knights Templars, it passed, in or shortly after 1308, the year in which disaster overtook that order, into the possession of the Hospitallers. It is to the latter that we owe the grand old dovecote at the farm close by.

It stands partly in the foldyard, partly in a sloping field. The door giving access to the yard is a comparatively modern innovation, the only original entrance being the one which opens on the field. The archway of this doorway has two upright stones to form the "key"; below them, filling in the arch and resting on the jamb-heads of the doorway, is a tympanum bearing an inscription. This, now barely legible, was deciphered some eighty years ago by that learned and capable local antiquary and historian, the Reverend John Webb. Dispensing with the abbreviations employed by the dovecote's builder, and accepting the almost certain correctness of the italicised words supplied by Mr. Webb from the con-

text, we have the inscription as follows:

> Anno Domini millesimo trecentesimo vicesimo sexto factum fuit istud co-*lumbare per fratrem* Ricardum.

or "In the year 1326 this dovecote was built by brother Richard."

And well and truly did this brother Richard carry out his work, with the result that it alone, of all domestic buildings of the Garway house, survives to-day; the church and dovecote—they are all that now remain. Not only is this now the case; it has been so for centuries. In a lease granted about 1520, while the "priest's chamber," stable, "cowheus," water-mill are all described as, *valde ruinosa et ad terram . . . prostrata*—wholly ruined and prostrate on the ground—the *columbarium* alone is spoken of as *bene et sufficienter reparatum*—well and sufficiently repaired.

In the case of a circular dovecote such as we admire here, this survival after other buildings of greater size and more importance have perished is perhaps not altogether difficult to be accounted for. It may well have owed its escape from destruction to the difficulty which

would-be despoilers—"squatters" eager for good building-stone, and others of like kind—would find in the selection of a fitting point on which to make their first attack. In a neglected building of rectangular form decay would not be long in setting in at the junction of walls, at doorways and around windows; and what the elements and time began, man could complete. But where will you strike first at a round, windowless building, with but one strong and narrow doorway in a wall three feet ten inches thick? The additional fact that a dovecote would yield but a small store of stone as compared with the long lofty walls of cloister or refectory, is also to be borne in mind; but it seems probable that the great Garway dovecote, like some others of its class, owes its immunity from spoliation to its shape and massive build. And we are duly thankful such should be the case.

Shortly before the clergyman already mentioned published his account, the building had advanced some distance down the easy road to ruin, imperilled by a more insidious and slow-moving foe than any stone-stealer.

A seedling oak, with a young ash for its companion, had attained a goodly size upon the summit of the walls; the roots, descending towards the ground, were working deadly havoc in the masonry. But happily the landlord's agent saw the danger, and the trees have now been long removed. One crack thus opened in the wall is still seen on the right, above the door.

And this is perhaps a fitting moment to beseech all dovecote-owners not to suffer an excess of greenery upon the treasure they possess; above all to set their faces against ivy, that most dangerous foe of masonry. To turn the dovecote into a green bower may be picturesque, but means disaster in the end. Moreover the full architectural form, the frequent beauty, of such buildings is not seen if they are smothered with a mass of leaves. A fruit-tree trained against the wall will do but little damage, and will amply serve to break bare spaces; nothing more should be allowed.

The masonry at Garway is sandstone in rubble work, plastered outside, while the interior facing is of wrought ashlar. The internal

BUTT HOUSE, HEREFORDSHIRE

diameter is seventeen feet three inches; the height from the floor, which was paved, to the spring of the vaulting, sixteen feet.

The interior presents many points of exceptional interest. Windows are entirely lacking, light and air being, like the former occupants, admitted through a circular opening two feet two inches in diameter placed in the middle of the vaulted roof. In the centre of the floor was a circular stone basin, six inches deep and five feet in diameter. To this was connected a drain to supply water from outside, with another to draw off excess.

A bathing-basin is a most unusual feature, if not quite unique, in English dovecotes; one would like to know if it was upon special order or his own initiative that brother Richard placed it here. He did not hold, apparently, with those authorities who, as we saw in speaking of the Roman columbarium, disapproved of a cold bath for sitting birds.

Look now at the nesting arrangements, which could hardly have been brought to greater perfection. The number of the holes—six hundred and sixty-six—has been suggested

to imply some mystic meaning, a point which shall be left untouched. They are arranged in twenty tiers of thirty-three nests each, alighting-ledges being provided to alternate tiers.

The holes are of that L shape usually seen in the "best" English dovecotes. The entrance to each is seven inches square, and the hole, after extending into the thickness of the wall for seventeen inches, turns at a right angle; all the nests in one tier turn in the same direction, those in the tier immediately above it and below it being reversed. This shape, seldom seen in Scotland, afforded the birds greater seclusion and more space. The whole of the internal masonry work is of the most elaborate and accurately fitting description.

Moreover brother Richard did not limit his inscriptions to the date and statement carved above the door. Just opposite the entrance, fourteen nest-tiers from the floor, he graved the name "Gilbertus." Who was Gilbertus? We now ask in vain. Perhaps the superior of the commandery, possibly a workman who assisted Richard at his task.

Some rather boastful and exulting symbols,

too, he placed upon his walls. A graved cross patee, overset and lying prostrate, typifies the Templars' fall; while to its left is seen the crosslet of the Hospitallers, placed upright. Some crudely executed figures, possibly crescents, seem identical with those in London's Temple Church.

There is no potence here. The open centre to the roof, the bathing-basin on the floor, would have necessitated special arrangements which the builder evidently did not care to make.

This Garway dovecote is described with a minuteness which will not often be repeated in the book, but which is surely deserved by the present example on account of its undoubted age, the excellence of its very typical workmanship, the good state of preservation in which it remains, and the unusual provision of a bathing-basin.

If Garway, for the dovecote-hunter, be the boast of Herefordshire, Bosbury, lying four miles from Ledbury on the county's eastern border, is its shame. At this village there stood, in the time of Bishop Cantilupe and of his chaplain and subsequent successor, Richard Swin-

field, one of the episcopal residences of the diocese. Its church is one of several in the county in which the tower stands detached—in this instance almost certainly with a view to defence. A farmhouse on the site of a former Templar preceptory retains the name of Temple Court; and at Old Court a gateway of the palace, with a cider cellar, once the episcopal refectory, remains. But what does *not* remain is the old dovecote, wilfully destroyed in 1884.

In a few cases only will dovecotes no longer surviving be spoken of in this volume; but that of Bosbury is particularly worthy of exemption from this rule. In the *Roll of the Household Expenses of Bishop Swinfield*, edited by Webb, we have a minutely detailed and extremely interesting account of the Bishop's itinerary, disbursements, etc., during a progress through his diocese in the autumn and winter months of 1289-90. Mention is there made of pigeons being taken—and paid for—from the dovecote at Bosbury on three successive days during the stay of Swinfield and his suite. Taking this record, together with Mr. Webb's statement that the dovecote, which he had seen, resembled

that at Garway, there can be little doubt that, but for an act of unpardonable vandalism, Herefordshire would still possess a dovecote at the very least thirty or forty years older than the one we have just seen.

Great size and age, solidity, absence of ornament, simplicity of form—such are the leading features of the first Herefordshire dovecote viewed. For an entire contrast let us seek the village of King's Pyon, or rather a secluded outlying farm in that parish; the Butt House, or "Buttas," lying some seven miles north-west of Hereford, in a rich grazing district where large herds of the red-coated, white-faced cattle of the county feed in the deep pastures, backed by hills and woods. The place can well be reached by going by road to Canon Pyon and then turning to the left; or it is pleasant to alight at Credenhill, the first station on the Hay and Brecon line; pass through the village, underneath the hill on which is Credenhill Camp; inquire for Brinsop, cross the old and little-travelled Hereford to Weobley road, and take the shady lane which leads to Wormesley Grange. There, turning to the right, we cross

a field or two and see the Butt House high upon a bank. The dovecote stands outside a yard immediately behind the dwelling, in a spot which makes it a good picture for the artist and photographer.

It stands, backed by the wooded hill beyond the field just crossed, a perfect specimen in miniature of that exquisite "black-and-white" half-timbered architecture which is one of the chief beauties of the Welsh Border district. The upper portion has a slight overhang; the walls are ornamented with a diamond pattern, and the beams and panels richly carved. On the north side is the date 1632, with the initials $\frac{\text{K.}}{\text{G. E.}}$, standing for the names of George and Elizabeth Karver. As to the very probable designer of this lovely little building there will later on be more to say.

There are three stories, only the upper one being fitted with nest-holes. It has been called the Falconry, and the suggestion made that the middle chamber of the three was intended to be occupied by hawks. It seems a somewhat sinister arrangement, that of placing hawks

and pigeons side by side—like caging lambs and lions cheek by jowl. But, always provided that the intervening floor was strong, the gentler occupants might in time grow fearless of their foes.

The size is small; twelve by eleven feet. A still smaller specimen of this style of dovecote stands in the garden of a house at Mansel Lacy, a pretty village not far distant, on the Hereford to Kington road. In this, the smallest dovecote of the county, the size is nine feet square. Close to the Mansel Lacy dovecote, in the gable of the dwelling-house, are pigeon-holes. The little building is much overgrown and in no little danger of decay and ruin.

The Butt House dovecote, kept in excellent condition, is four-gabled, and without a cupola or lantern on the roof. Luntley Court, a fine black and white farmhouse of the late seventeenth century, somewhat defaced by modern additions, stands in the not very distant parish of Dilwyn; and here we have a dovecote which, while less richly decorated than the Butt House example, has a four-gabled lantern on the roof. Though not entitled to minute description, it

has one peculiarity which calls for mention. Its date is 1673, that on the house itself being 1674.

This might be taken as mere careless error; but the case of Luntley does not stand alone, there being other instances of such discrepancy of date. The following explanation may perhaps be suggested as acceptable. It is possible that a man about to build himself a house might prudently reflect that the work would take several months, even a year or more, while the erection of a dovecote might be easily accomplished in the course of a few weeks. A large portion of his food supply would necessarily be of home production; and he might very well decide to get the dovecote ready in advance, so that its occupants could settle down in their new home before he needed them.

The main road through Canon Pyon will in time bring us to Eardisland, a delightful village on the little river Arrow; here are some of the best half-timbered houses in the district, a notable example being the Staick House, immediately at the east end of Arrow Bridge. Across the stream, in a farmyard beside the water, stands a dovecote differing much in style from

GARWAY

BUTT HOUSE

HEREFORDSHIRE

Face p. 56.

those yet seen.

It is a square brick building, two-storied, with walls twenty feet in length. Its four-gabled roof is topped by a lantern of the same form, on the crown of which is a weather-vane in the shape of a fish—appropriate for a building on the bank of so well-known an angler's stream. The lower chamber is supplied with windows, nest-holes being found only in the loft above. This dovecote is particularly charming from the beauty of its situation and the mellow colour of its old brick walls.

The fish which forms its weather-vane reminds us of the great diversity displayed by these useful terminals. The arrow and the cock are both comparatively rare. A dragon, shield with coat-of-arms, two-headed eagle, fox, and claw, are known. In the absence of a vane the lantern is frequently surmounted by a pole and ball.

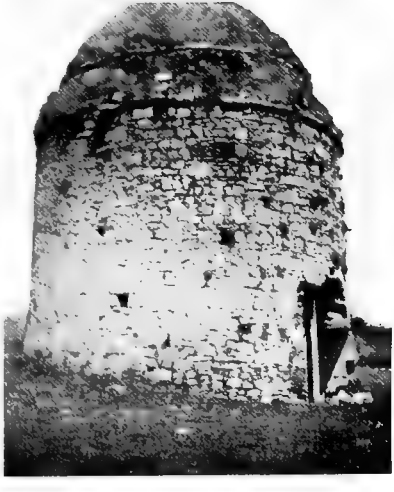
The shape of the Eardisland dovecote, and both shape and size in the Butt House specimen, preclude the probability of their containing a potence; "possibility" it is not safe to say, for potences are sometimes found in square

English dovecotes, still more frequently in Scottish specimens. We shall, however, be justified, and not disappointed, in looking for one in the example next upon our list; that at Richard's Castle, a village close to the Shropshire border and best reached from Woofferton Junction, on the Hereford and Shrewsbury line. The westernmost and least frequented of the two roads running between Leominster and Ludlow must be crossed, a turn uphill being taken at the village inn.

Nearly at the top of the hill we should come to the church, with yet another of Herefordshire's detached towers; and then, still higher, find the castle after which the place is named; a wooded mound, knee-deep in nettles, overgrown with brambles, but still showing traces of a ditch and walls. This Border fortress was erected by, and took its name from, Richard Fitz Scrob, a Norman of the days of Edward the Confessor; and it shares with Ewyas, far in the south-west of the county, the distinction of being a pre-Conquest stronghold.

But to discover the dovecote we need climb the hill as far as neither church nor castle. On

COURT FARM, RICHARD'S CASTLE,
HEREFORDSHIRE



ANGLE HALL,
PEMBROKESHIRE

Face p. 58.

the left hand as we ascend, and full in view, we find it standing in the garden of a picturesque farmhouse. It is a circular building of stone, its roof not only crowned by a three-gabled lantern, but broken by a trio of dormer windows. These three dormers, a detail unique in Herefordshire but matched in a beautiful Worcestershire dovecote, add greatly to the attraction of this charming old building. Few dovecotes are more pleasing to the eye.

Inside, as we have said, there is a potence; also six hundred and thirty nests. The walls are three feet eleven inches thick, exceeding those at Garway by an inch, though the building can hardly pretend to rival our first specimen in age. In truth it lacks some of the austere aloofness which we may have felt about the Garway cote. This is a snug, warm, comfortable-looking building, not too old and too remote to take its share in rural life to-day.

Following the main road south for some six miles we come to Leominster, not far distant from which town the Arrow joins the Lugg. If we elect to take as guide the larger stream, in its now somewhat sluggish course to seek

the Wye, we shall wind round the wooded height of Dinmore Hill; pass one of Herefordshire's finest country-houses, Hampton Court; and presently arrive at Bodenham and its bridge. Here, hardly a stone's-throw from the river, stands a dovecote built of brick, octagonal in shape. This, too, is an attractive little building—in a farmhouse garden, and beside a flowing stream.

At Mordiford, four miles east of Hereford, the waters of the Lugg join those of Wye. The village, one of the most charming in the county, lies upon our route to-day; for on the slope behind it is Old Sufton, where there is a dovecote which, although brick-faced, is built of stone. It is circular, but—a rather unusual feature—is topped by an octagonal lantern. On the weather-vane, a double-headed eagle, are the initials I. M., with the date 1764; the cote itself is very obviously of greater age. There is no potence, and the nest-holes are found only in the upper part.

Away to the east, some distance behind Mordiford, let us seek out Much Marcle, where, at the house called Hellens, once the home of

a well-known Herefordshire authority on fruit-growing and cider-making, is an octagonal brick dovecote, largely adapted to modern uses. There are some nest-holes left. Its octagonal lantern carries a flag as weather-vane; on it are the initials E. W., with the date 1753. The building itself is dated in large letters 1641 with the initials $\frac{\text{W.}}{\text{F. M.}}$, whose owners were Ffoulkes and Margaret Walwyn.

It seems as though the county's rivers might be taken as our guides. The Wye would, after many windings, bring us down to Ross; not far from Ross is Weston, where, at Bollitree Dairy Farm, there is—or was, for recent information has proved unobtainable—a dovecote which presents at least one interesting feature. It is a rectangular stone building, and at each corner was placed a guard against attacks from rats, in a form which, though recommended by the early eighteenth century *Sportsman's Dictionary*, is seldom seen. The safeguard was an iron angle-plate on which a climbing animal would slip and fall. The writer of the work just mentioned, adds, that they

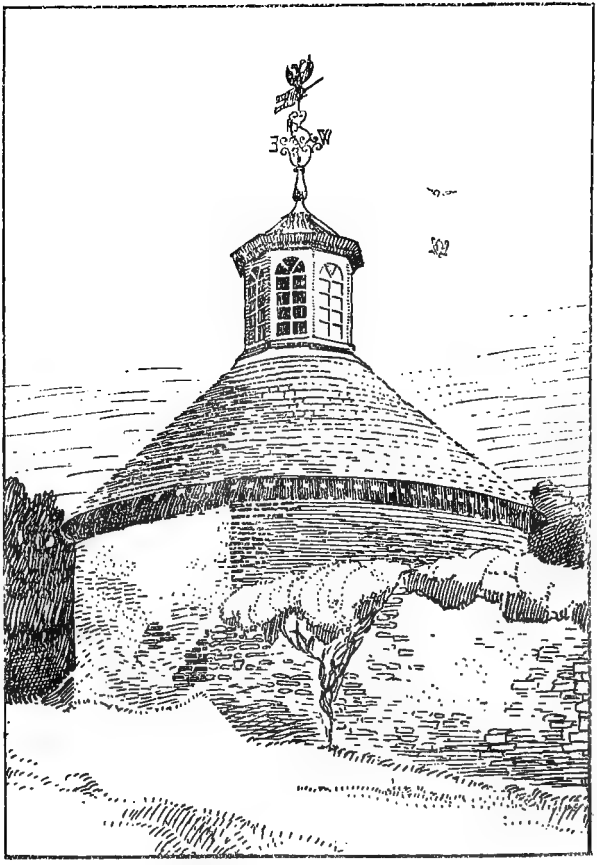
should fall on iron spikes placed upright in the ground; but at the Dairy Farm these spikes, if ever they existed, have now disappeared; removed, quite possibly, by some humane proprietor of pigeons, who, while anxious to protect his birds, was yet unwilling to push matters to extremes against the rats.

In giving to the dovecotes of this county all the space that can be spared, we have but skimmed the cream, and that with a light hand. Of more than seventy or eighty still surviving in the county, many others well deserve to be recorded, though passed over here. The briefest mention must be made, however, of the specimen at Cowarne Court, near Bromyard. This, although now covered by a cone-shaped roof of gentle slope, exhibits clear internal evidence of having once been vaulted like the Garway specimen. Its walls, too, are three feet nine inches thick, good proof of ripe old age.

At Foxley, a fine house in Yazor parish, on the broad road running west from Hereford to Hay, is the sole remnant of the former mansion of red brick, a dovecote which, while presenting few other features of interest, is the only Here-

fordshire example to be hexagonal, a form which we shall rarely find in any part.

Reluctantly, and conscious that we leave full many a gem behind, we cross the county's northern border into Shropshire, a land rich in ancient houses, wooded hills and charming streams.



OLD SUFTON, HEREFORDSHIRE

CHAPTER FIVE
SHROPSHIRE

CHAPTER FIVE
SHROPSHIRE

EVEN our cousins from America, flying travellers though they be, intent on seeing the cream of Europe in a month and England in a week, may yet take back with them across the sea the picture of a Shropshire pigeon-house. Let them, upon their way to Chester, call at Shrewsbury for an hour or two; and, having admired to the full that fine old Border town, where you may listen to Welsh sermons on a Sunday, hear Welsh spoken freely in the streets on market-days,—then let them ask to be directed to Whitehall, a sixteenth-century mansion of the suburbs, lying a little way across the English Bridge and close beside the Abbey Church. Here they will find as fair a dovecote as the county has to show,—and that is saying much.

Just as these words are being written the old house is undergoing conversion into an hotel. Its builder and first owner, Richard Prince, a "proud Salopian" of Elizabethan days, thought little, as he reared his stately dwelling where the Abbey grange had stood, that it would one day harbour the chance guest, who comes and calls

for cheer, and pays his bill and goes his way with little further thought for house or host. And indeed the visitor whose luck may bring him to Whitehall, though he may give but little thought to either Richard Prince or present host, is hardly likely altogether to neglect the house. For he will take his ease amid ideal surroundings; the perfection of Elizabethan architecture, filled internally with furniture and tapestries and pictures, all in keeping with the setting they adorn. In the old garden stands the dovecote, one of the most interesting that Shropshire owns.

Within the last century it has indeed been shorn of the full charm of its former surroundings; for a fine group of larches that stood near it, said to have been the earliest planted in the county, has now disappeared. Gone, too, the grand old walnut-tree, with trunk that measured sixteen feet in girth, and boughs that spread their shade for twenty yards around. We will not grudge them; for the dovecote still adorns the junction of two tile-topped garden walls. And where, indeed, could it be better placed? Has not Trigg included dovecotes, and most

rightly, among "garden ornaments"?

The building is of brick, octagonal; inside are some five hundred nests, with potence and its ladder still in good repair. The tiled roof, also octagonal, is crowned by a high cupola, and small rectangular windows are set high in the walls. Between these windows and the eaves we find a feature which, while a welcome ornament, forms subject of discussion and dispute; a very beautiful arched corbel-table made in moulded brick.

The dovecote is generally referred to the same period as the mansion, which was built by the aforesaid Richard Prince, between the years 1578 and 1582, on the site of the grange belonging to the Benedictine abbey, dissolved in 1539. The Abbey Church, as has been said, still stands, and the refectory pulpit may be seen in an adjacent yard. It has been urged by architectural experts that a corbel-table such as this was an unusual feature of Elizabethan times, and one unlikely to have been produced by any architect employed by Prince.

A possible explanation of this feature, a great addition to the beauty of the pigeon-house, is

to be found by an examination of the lower portion of the walls and of the foundations upon which they stand. These are of stone and are octagonal. It seems possible, therefore, that the monks of the Abbey had an octagonal dovecote of stone on this same spot; that Richard Prince's builder pulled it down, and rebuilt it in brick, being careful to reproduce a former corbel-table. The point is one on which we may well hesitate to dogmatise, preferring to fall back upon the placid prudence of George Eliot's *Old Leisure*,—"happy in his inability to know the causes of things, preferring the things themselves." And certainly between enjoyment of this corbel-table and a learned explanation of its presence few would hesitate to make their choice.

The lower portion of the wall to which the dovecote joins is old, with many old bricks built into the upper part. Close by is the monks' barn, much modernised, but happily still covered by its ancient roof of stone.

Only some few degrees less charming than the Whitehall dovecote is the excellent example to be found at Henley Hall, near Ludlow,

lying south of Shrewsbury by some twenty miles. It is of about the same period as that at Whitehall, or perhaps somewhat later. It lacks the corbel-table, and is rather broader in proportion to its height; but the wide-eaved lantern has a very pleasing effect; and the roof, although its tiles are comparatively modern, is agreeably broken by four dormer windows, one in each alternate section of the octagon. The length of each of the eight walls is ten feet; height to the eaves about fifteen.

The potence inside is in good working order, while of the nests, nearly six hundred in number, some are still occupied by pigeons, and the building has a cheerful, thriving, well-kept air. With regard to the nests it is interesting to note that the inner arm of the L turns to the left in every tier; a rather unusual variation from the more general practice by which, when the direction does not change with each tier, the turn is to the right. Such are the little differences for which the dovecote-lover early learns to look.

The doorway is quite noticeably narrow, being two feet two inches wide, though nearly

five feet high; while for a brick dovecote of this period the walls are unusually thick—thirty-four inches.

Similar, both in shape and material, to those already described is the dovecote standing in a field at Chetwynd House, near Newport. Its history, prior to the present ownership, which dates from 1808, remains a blank. It is smaller than the one at Henley Hall, the total wall-length being no more than sixty feet. The roof, its tiling modern, has a lantern with glass windows, and a weather-vane above; there is also a trap for catching the birds. The potence still exists, and the six hundred nest-holes are L-shaped. The building is not only in good repair, but is still applied to its original purpose.

A dovecote existed until comparatively lately in the park at Tong Castle, but was pulled down on account of its "dangerous" condition; though whether the park was a public thoroughfare and the safety of wayfarers affected, and what insurmountable difficulties rendered its repair and preservation impossible, are points on which no information can be given. Involved in similar darkness are the causes which

WHITEHALL, SHREWSBURY

Face p. 72.

brought about the destruction of the old dovecote formerly standing near the rectory at Llanymynech, a village close to the Montgomeryshire border. This was demolished by the rector; not—be it noted well—the present rector, who, with the villagers, deplores the loss.

Most probably of sixteenth-century work is the circular brick dovecote at the Lynches, an old house which stands not far from Yockleton, a station on the Shrewsbury to Welshpool line. Comparatively small, it is only fifty-three feet in circumference, and is re-roofed with modern slates. Its walls are thick, its doorway small, its potence still in place. The nest-holes, plain rectangular recesses, are still occupied.

"Cannot this vaunted Shropshire show us dovecotes dating from a period prior to Elizabethan times?" exclaims some reader, eager for the hoary stones of Norman work. The Whitehall dovecote, beautiful in form and decoration, easily accessible to visitors to Shrewsbury who are pressed for time, was chosen for our early notice upon that account, and it has led the way to others of its age and style. But

there are far older dovecotes to be found in Shropshire; and in quest of one of these we may betake ourselves to the most pleasant garden of the White House, Aston Munslow, a place lying north-east of that important local junction, Craven Arms.

The White House dovecote is a round stone building, very obviously of Norman date; fairly large, with a circumference of seventy-five feet and a height to the eaves of fifteen feet. One of its points of greatest interest is the thickness of the walls—four feet, while those at Garway, it will be recalled, are but three feet ten inches. The entrance is a very narrow one.

There is no potence now remaining, but we can still see the socket-hole in which the lower end was placed; also a remnant of the beam itself. The nest-holes, numbering about five hundred, are L-shaped. There is a string-course placed unusually low down—some two feet only from the ground.

Unhappily, during the owner's temporary absence from the property, the roof fell in; but some of the stone tiles which covered it have been preserved, together with the wooden pegs

that held them in their place. These tiles were of a small size on the upper portion of the roof, becoming larger towards the eaves.

The fall of the roof was, unfortunately, followed by disaster to a section of the walls themselves; an accident not very frequent in a dovecote of this shape and massive build, which usually proves capable of standing not a little buffeting from time and weather without giving way. It would be a very serious loss to Shropshire if this dovecote were allowed to disappear, since, judging from the thickness of its walls and other signs, it can be little later in its date than that at Garway. But happily the owner of White House is now the occupier also, keen to check all chance of further harm.

Not differing greatly in regard to style, nor probably in age, is the fine dovecote standing in the grounds of one of the most charming of old Shropshire mansions, Shipton Hall, in the Much Wenlock district. Shipton itself, once a seat of the Myttons, is a fine Elizabethan house, restored—and well restored—in George the Second's reign.

Disaster has been busy with the dovecote

here. The roof, which bore a cupola, has fallen in. The walls still stand—four feet in thickness, with a doorway which, though wide, is little more than four feet high.

Inside is a potence, and, still more interesting, about four hundred nest-holes, thirteen inches deep, and *rounded* at the back, a form but seldom seen. Surely such shape, though doubtless giving extra trouble to the builder, meant additional comfort to the birds. These rounded nests alone would be enough to date this dovecote from a long-past day, when time and trouble were nothing as compared with the result desired.

Also in this district, in the garden of the rectory at Harley, is a square brick dovecote, from the loft of which the nests have been removed. A trap-door in the roof of the lower story gives access to this loft, the ascent having formerly been made by pegs driven into the wall as a foothold. The little building is of no great antiquity or importance, but a dovecote in a garden is not willingly passed by.

At Bourton Hall, another house of interest near Wenlock, is a solidly built square dove-

cote of stone. The length of each wall is eighteen feet, and the height to the eaves twenty. The building has been turned into a storehouse and all trace of nests has disappeared.

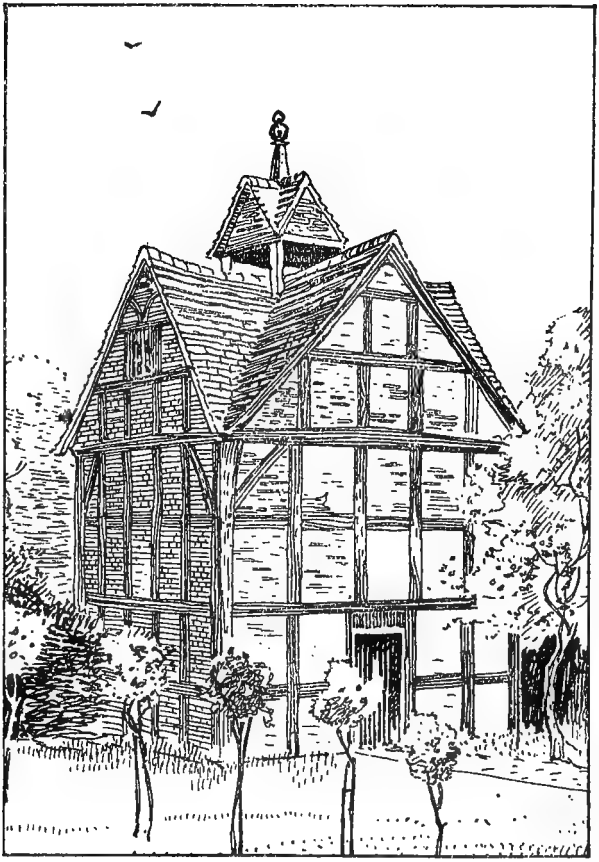
In the garden of Thonglands, a farmhouse partly of Elizabethan timber-work and partly of still older date, lying in one of the most charming of all Shropshire's charming districts—the secluded valley of Corvedale—there is a circular stone dovecote. The roof has fallen in, and the walls, burdened with a weight of ivy, are upon the way to follow suit. Inside is the comparatively small number of two hundred and fifty nests, arranged in ten tiers, and all plain oblong recesses. There is no sign of any potence having been in use. The walls are only thirty inches thick, a fact which seems to negative the bold opinion offered by a villager that it might date from "in the Roman times." Some speak of it, however, as of fourteenth-century date; in any case it merits to be better cared for than is now the case.

At Rowton Hall, Broseley, a sixteenth-century house best reached from Coalport station, there is a massive dovecote built of brick, eight-

een feet square and over thirty feet in height. It was at one time even higher, having a tiled roof and loft. The present roofing material is —*horribile dictu*—corrugated iron, surely the last indignity that such a building can be called upon to bear. The walls are three feet thick, the doorway noticeably small. About one thousand nest-holes still remain, rising from the ground level to the roof. At Coalport and Broseley we are getting into the brick-and tile-making district of Shropshire, and it is therefore more interesting than surprising to see that the bricks used for the nests were specially moulded for the purpose.

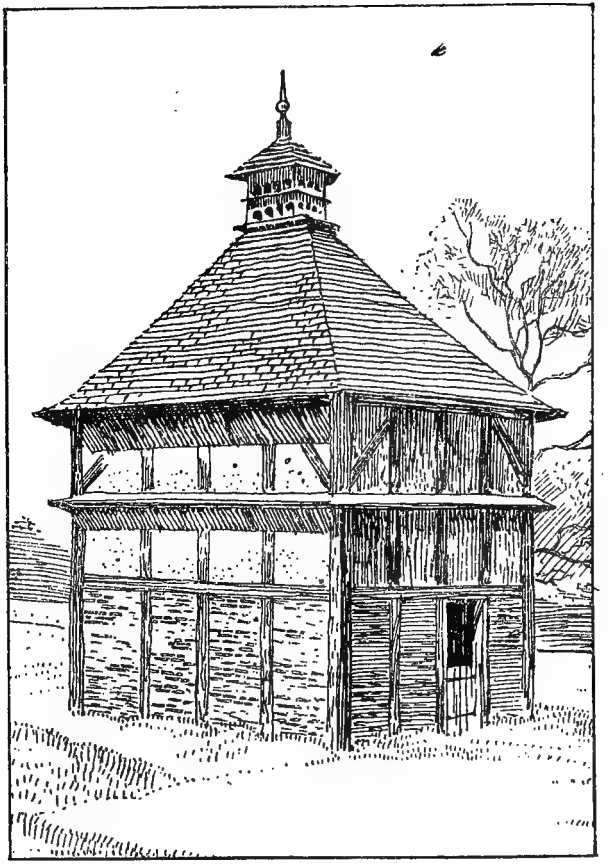
As Herefordshire at Mansel Lacy, so Shropshire in more than one instance exhibits accommodation for pigeons fashioned in the fabric of the dwelling-house itself. This is so at Tickler-ton Hall, a house built near Much Wenlock in the reign of Charles I.; where, in addition to a square dovecote, there are pigeon-holes in one of the house-walls. At the Woodhouse, a small dwelling of Jacobean period in Wyke, a dovecote exists in the attic gable. Finally, at Hungerford, lying between Ludlow and Mun-

slow, there is a third instance of this kind. In a stone house of Georgian date two wings projecting at the rear are linked together by an overhanging roof which forms a covered balcony, and is believed intended as a shelter for these birds. It is impossible to look upon provision of this kind without an understanding of the great importance formerly attached to pigeons as a source of food-supply.



DORMSTONE, WORCESTERSHIRE

CHAPTER SIX
WORCESTER AND WARWICK



ODDINGLEY, WORCESTERSHIRE

CHAPTER SIX
WORCESTER AND WARWICK

In the number, interest, and beauty of its dovecotes the county of Worcester may be fitly grouped with the two already described. With Herefordshire, especially, it presents many interesting parallels. Statistics of Herefordshire dovecotes, compiled some thirty years ago, showed the total number then existing to be seventy-four, while more than thirty had been demolished or allowed to go to ruin. In Worcestershire there were, fifteen years later, ninety-three dovecotes, while twenty others, known to have existed formerly, had disappeared. In one point Worcestershire falls very far behind the sister county; as compared with Herefordshire's twenty-one octagonal examples, she has only one to show.

Of circular dovecotes Worcestershire has none of an age certainly equal to, far less exceeding, that at Garway; but she possesses one of greater size. This, the largest in the county, stands in a field at South Littleton, and is no less than eighty-three feet in circumference.

It is built of local lias stone, much mixed with rubble, and there are remains of rough-cast on the outer surface of the walls. It is lighted by a very small window-slit; and the roof, covered with stone slabs and now reported as in bad repair, is crowned by a small, square, four-pillared cupola. The walls are about two feet thick, the doorway of fair size. The want of thickness in the walls is an argument against the age of this specimen being anything approaching that of Garway, for it is a sound general rule that the thicker the walls the older the dovecote.

Inside are eighteen tiers of nests, with an alighting-ledge to every second tier; two more tiers are now almost hidden by the raising of the earthen floor. The number of nest-holes is about six hundred and fifty. The potence, though not now in working order, still remains, bearing one arm.

Littleton, not content with the possession of the largest dovecote in the county, once established pigeons in the church. Here, extracted from the churchwardens' accounts of the parish, are particulars concerning the ar-

rangement:

"In the syxte yere of the Reygn' of Kynge Edwarde the vjth. all owr churche books of latten (Latin) were tak'n a way and caryed to worcetr and then we had all owr sves (services) in Englys. And in the fyrst yere of our sou'aygn lady mary owr quene, and all owr books gone that showld serve owr churche. All the hole paryss a greyd wyth Sr. hufrey acton then owr vicar—and for hys gentylness and be cawse owr churche had but lyttyll money in store, and lacked mony things in owr churche we were all co'tent that the seyd vicar showld have all the p'fett (profit) of the pyggynsthat use the stepull of owr churche for all the tyme that he shalbe Vicar here, fyndyng his books, this a grement was made a pon Wenysday in the Wytson wycke, the fyrst yere of the Reygn' of owr sou'aygn lorde phyllipe owr king, and the second yere of owr sou'aygn lady mary' owr quene."

Or, in brief terms and modern spelling, the parish lacked the means for purchasing a new set of service books, and accordingly agreed with "Sr. hufrey acton," otherwise Humfrey Acton,

a former monk of Evesham, who was vicar of Littleton throughout the reigns of Edward and Mary, and for some time after the accession of Elizabeth, that he should provide the books, receiving in return the profit accruing from the steeple pigeons. It was a compromise which relieved the Littletonians from immediate embarrassment, and doubtless proved of ultimate profit to their vicar. To other cases where pigeons were housed in the tower, and even in other parts of churches, further allusion will be made.

Higher in proportion to its size, with much thicker walls and a general appearance of greater antiquity than the Littleton dovecote, is the circular example at Comberton, near Pershore. It is about seventy feet in circumference, and the walls are three feet seven inches thick. Built of grey stone, it is supported by three staged buttresses, and entered by a small round-headed doorway. The potence, if once present, has now disappeared; but nest-holes to the number of more than five hundred remain, some being still occupied by pigeons. The roof is crowned by a small

open cupola, and the whole building is in good repair.

Exceeding both these dovecotes in respect of massiveness of walls are the two found respectively at Wick, near Pershore, and at the Manor House, Cleeve Prior. That at Wick, where the walls have a thickness of four feet, is seventy-five feet round, and holds some thirteen hundred nests. It is constructed of a greyish-yellow stone, which has once been covered with plaster; stands upon sloping ground, is supported by three buttresses, and has a single dormer window in the roof. The potence is in place.

Of still more solid construction, having walls four feet six inches thick, is the Cleeve Prior dovecote. The potence is absent; and although the building is sixty feet in circumference it only contains four hundred and fifty nests. These are provided with alighting-ledges at every third tier—a not uncommon arrangement. The dovecote is in good repair, and is, moreover, still applied to its original use.

One of the most charming—perhaps, indeed, *the* most charming—of all Worcestershire

dovecotes is the delightful building to be found at Kyre Park, Kyre Magna. Beautiful in itself, its attractions are enhanced by beauty of situation; it stands in close proximity to a fine buttressed tithe barn, with good crow-stepped gable-ends. Inside, the potence and its ladder are in place, and the five hundred nests are still in excellent repair.

Externally the dovecote is singularly attractive. The doorway is slightly arched, and a few feet below the eaves a string-course encircles the walls. The roof is crowned by a four-gabled open cupola on slender pillars, and its slope is broken by three dormer windows, a picturesque grouping already seen at Richard's Castle, Herefordshire. None will regret the time or trouble spent in visiting this charming specimen.

Of square pigeon-houses in Worcestershire one may be first mentioned which, though not otherwise particularly attractive, deserves our notice by the rare appearance of a potence in an English building of this shape. This is the brick-built dovecote at Elmley Lovett, where alighting-ledges are provided to each tier of

nests, instead of the rather frequent compromise of giving one for every second or third tier.

As has been already pointed out, the provision of a potence in a square dovecote is of comparatively rare occurrence—south of the Tweed at least—and its utility obviously limited. One inclines to think that, where so found, it has been introduced without due consideration; the dovecote's builder having noticed its presence in a circular or octagonal house, admired it as a useful and ingenious contrivance, and jumped too hastily to the conclusion that it would prove of equal service in his own. Experience would go far to disappoint his hopes.

Of square dovecotes built of stone there are a dozen or more examples in Worcestershire. Of these no less than six were present in one village—that of Bretforton. One, said to be of medieval age, is at the Manor House. A second, with one wall rebuilt in brick and timber, bears the date 1630; while a third is of the middle of the eighteenth century.

Elsewhere, at Dunhamstead, a stone dove-

cote twenty-one feet square has some eight hundred nests, brick-built, with an alighting-ledge for every tier. The roof has been repaired. Offenham Court, with its pigeon-house twenty feet square, four-gabled, and lighted by four windows, is of interest as standing on the site once occupied by the sanatorium of the Abbey of Evesham, in which house the last of a long line of abbots died.

In a county so well wooded as Worcester we shall find without surprise numerous dovecotes into the construction of which timber enters to a large extent. Some are the genuine "black and white," others have timber framing, with brick "filling-in." Of the latter kind was formerly the very interesting example at the Manor Farm, Cropthorne; interesting here as being of that form very common in Scotland but rare in England—a house of two compartments. The house is twenty-eight feet six inches long, by fifteen feet ten inches broad. Two sides are built in part of timber, but the other two are now of brick. The two compartments contain a total of five hundred and ten nests. The whole is roofed with tiles; the lan-

terns that give light to each division are in somewhat bad repair.

Two dovecotes stand in the garden of Bag End Farm, Dormstone, each holding between five hundred and six hundred nests. One, slightly the smaller of the two, has a four-gabled roof and four windows, and bears the date 1413 upon some lead-work. A somewhat similar dovecote occurs at the Moat Farm, in the same parish; it also is four-gabled, and is built on a stone foundation.

The comparatively small dovecote at Manor House Farm, Broughton Hackett, is of "black and white" structure on a foundation of stone. It is of rather special interest; for, in spite of its small size—sixteen by fourteen feet—it contains as many as twelve hundred nests. These are of wood, arranged with great economy of space. Less than half this accommodation is available in the much larger building at Staunton Court; a dovecote twenty-six feet by twenty-one, with walls two feet six inches thick. It is hardly probable that this is the dovecote alluded to in the Red Book of Exchequer, where it is noted that Peter de

Staunton, who died in 1288, "held a capital messuage and garden, a dovecot, three water-mills, two groves of eight acres in all, ten acres of meadow, and 216 acres of arable land."

We have it on the authority of the Evesham Chronicles that Abbot Randulph, whose tenure of office dated from 1214 to 1229, brought about, among other improvements on his lands, the erection of dovecotes at Offenham, Hamstone, Wickhampton, and Ombresley. At Offenham there still is, attached to other buildings, a very small dovecote, nine feet by ten; it is much out of repair, the timber framing being filled in with mixed brick and lath and plaster. But this was certainly not that which Abbot Randulph built; and the same may be said of the far more attractive specimen at Hawford, Ombresley, built upon a stone foundation, seventeen feet square, four-gabled, and with an open lantern in the roof. The lower part has been converted to the purpose of a coach-house, and nest-holes remain on two sides only of the upper floor. To the dilapidated dovecote at Oddingley, still containing six hundred nests, is attached the sinister story of its having form-

ed the rendezvous of the gang of scoundrels who, in 1805, contrived and carried out the murder of the rector of the parish.

A readily explicable instance of a potence being found in a square dovecote occurs at Court Farm, Leigh, where a comparatively modern dovecote, square in form, stands on the old foundations of a circular forerunner, the potence of the former building having been allowed to keep its place. Of ancient dovecotes lost to Worcestershire it is permissible to speak of the large circular examples demolished during the last century at Cotheridge, Huddington Court, and Fladbury. Not so long since there was alive an aged roadman who remembered helping to destroy the one last named. Its stones were not even devoted to use in the parish, but were taken by barge down the Severn to Gloucester.

The reader is reminded of the warning given in the preface; that this book does not profess to be exhaustive, to mention all the best surviving dovecotes, or even to deal with every county. Over the neighbouring counties of Warwick and Leicester we shall therefore pass

with haste.

Leicester, indeed, though not without its dovecotes, does not seem particularly rich in them. One will be found at Houghton-on-the-Hill. It is a square brick building, twenty feet in length, by sixteen feet six inches wide; gabled, and with a slated roof. The very moderate thickness of the walls prepares us for the knowledge that its age does not exceed two centuries, it having been erected in 1716. There are about one thousand L-shaped nests.

In a field at Aston Flamville is a square brick dovecote of the early eighteenth century, the date being 1715. The length of wall is eighteen feet, and the L-shaped nest-holes number eight hundred.

In Warwickshire there falls to be noticed the not very common instance of accommodation for pigeons being provided in a castle—the fourteenth-century fortress of Maxstoke, where a chamber over the gate-house has been partly fitted up with nests. A reliable architectural authority, by whom this castle has been recently described, is of opinion that the arrangement was carried out some time in the sixteenth

century.

At the well-known house of Compton Wynyates an octagonal dovecote stands in an orchard. It is of brick, with stone corners; has a height of thirty-five feet, a diameter of eighteen, and the very moderate wall thickness of one foot ten inches. Inside are some six hundred L-shaped nests. The potence was removed some time ago. We shall probably be right in assigning this dovecote to a date about 1600.

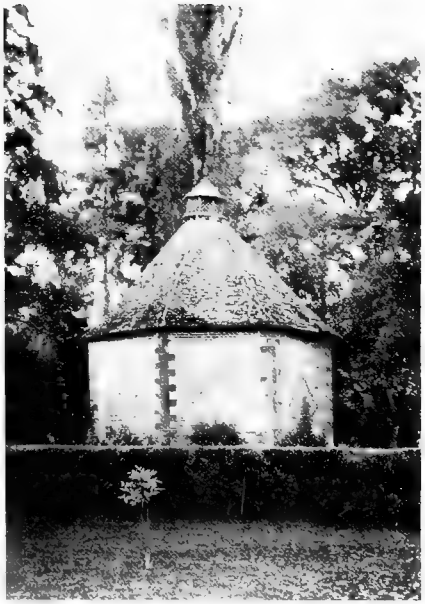
There is a fine circular dovecote of very considerable age standing at "haunted Hillboro'," a hamlet in the parish of Temple Grafton, not far from Stratford-on-Avon. Of this example particulars are unavailable; but fortunately it is otherwise with the very interesting dovecote at Kinwarton, near Alcester, a building on the rector's glebe. It is, with fish-ponds, the only surviving relic of a former moated grange which belonged to the abbey of Evesham.

The dovecote, solidly constructed of stone in rather thin layers, plastered externally, has an internal diameter of seventeen feet two inches, a height to the eaves of fifteen feet, and a wall thickness of three feet seven inches. The roof,

surmounted by a lantern, is tiled, and the supporting beams and rafters are in themselves worth careful inspection. There is a single dormer window.

The potence is still in place, only one or two rungs of its ladder being missing. The nest-holes, numbering over five hundred, are plain oblong recesses, varying a good deal in depth.

The doorway is particularly good. Its extreme height, to the point of the small ogee arch, is three feet nine inches; four inches less to the spring of the arch. The width is just two feet. The building, which is excellently cared for, cannot be much, if at all later than the fourteenth century.



COMPTON WYNYATES,
WARWICKSHIRE

CLATTERCOTE PRIORY,
OXFORDSHIRE

Face p. 90.

CHAPTER SEVEN
NORTHAMPTON, BUCKINGHAM, AND HUNTINGDON

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NORTHAMPTON, BUCKINGHAM, AND HUNTINGDON

PASSING eastward, the player at this game of dovecote-hunting finds himself growing "warm" on entering Northamptonshire. Dovecotes are numerous, though many have now disappeared; they are curious in being for the most part either square or oblong, though circular and octagonal examples are by no means absent; while many are but a short distance from the county town.

Let us award first place to a fine dovecote of unusual size. It will be found at Newton-in-the-Willows, a small village lying a little to the west of Geddington. Church, village, dovecote stand apart from one another; the last-named, lonely in a field, is all that now remains of a former manor-house belonging to the Tresham family.

Its size is most unusual; fifty-three feet nine, by twenty-three feet seven; the height to the eaves twenty feet, and to the roof-ridge about

thirty-five. Like similar pigeon-houses of this shape in Scotland,—where, however, they are mostly covered by a lean-to roof—the building is divided into two compartments of equal size, the party-wall being carried through the roof, which is of Colly Weston slabs. Each section of the roof has a small lantern to give entrance to the pigeons, furnished with alighting-ledges facing south and north.

The walls, of local limestone, have a marked "batter"—sloping slightly inwards as they rise. On three sides they are blank, being broken on the south side only by a heavily barred window giving light to each compartment, with a door to each. The doorways are noticeably small; three feet four inches high, and two feet wide. The doors themselves are almost certainly original, being made of solid oak four inches thick.

In the middle of the south wall, between the windows, a stone slab bears the name "Maurice Tresham" in raised lettering. Above, at the end of the table-course over the dividing-wall between the two compartments, is the device of the Tresham family, a triple trefoil. This is repeated on the north side, and again on a stone

which caps the ridge.

Such is the only attempt at ornament on this great dovecote, and the building would present a somewhat bare and forbidding appearance, had not its old stones "weathered" to a richly variegated hue, largely due to the growth of many-coloured lichens.

Each of the two compartments has accommodation for two thousand pairs of birds. The nests are empty now; but in the spring and summer wild bees make their nests in interstices in the walls; while daffodils and snowdrops, springing here and there about the meadow, tell of the old manor garden that has passed away.

The dovecote's builder was, there can be little doubt, the first of several Maurice Treshams known to have existed in the family. He was born in 1530 and came into the estate when only eight years old.

The village of Harleston, four miles distant from Northampton on the Rugby road, offers a dovecote very different from the Newton specimen, alike in situation, shape, and size. The village itself is delightful, with its houses

built of local sandstone, roofed with thatch or tiles; the dovecote, far from standing lonely and deserted in a meadow, peeps upon us from behind a garden wall.

It is a round building of local sand- and iron-stone, in some measure ivy-grown. The roof, renewed three-quarters of a century ago, is of the well-known local Colly Weston slates, and is topped by an octagonal lantern and a weather-vane. The wall is "set back" half-way up, with a good string-course; while a broad table-course appears immediately below the eaves. The walls, fifteen feet high, are three feet thick. Entrance is by a doorway four feet high, two feet one inch in breadth. Internally the building is divided into two stories by a modern floor, and holds about four hundred nests, now long disused.

The thickness of the walls, the small size of the doorway, are good signs of age; but it is a somewhat doubtful tradition which dates this interesting structure to 1320, the year in which the parish church was rebuilt. More probably it has existed since the first quarter of the fifteenth century.

Harleston can show another dovecote, far less picturesque, however, than the one just viewed. It is rectangular and almost square, the wall-length being twenty-one feet by twenty-three. The walls are three feet thick, but the doorway is unusually large—six feet in height, three feet three inches wide. The height to the eaves is sixteen feet. The roof, once covered with the famous local slates already spoken of, is now of small red tiles. The somewhat bald appearance of the whole is well toned down by a large pear-tree trained on the west wall, as also by the "weathering" of the lichen-covered stones. A single window, narrow, tall, round-headed, breaks the western wall. The dovecote, probably about three hundred years of age, contains eight hundred nest-holes, all deserted now.

A word with reference to the largeness of the doorway here. Though a small doorway may be looked on as a sign of age, a larger entrance is not always indicative of modernity. The doorway, made both small and strong for safety of the inmates, was found nothing but an inconvenience when the dovecote, as a dovecote, fell

into disuse, and it was desired to employ it as a stable, cart-shed, or the like; so that a low and narrow doorway has now often disappeared, being swallowed up in one of modern size. In the same way the potence, useful when employed for its due purpose, was found later to be in the way of carts or cattle, and has consequently often been cast out.

Still occupied by pigeons is the dovecote at Denton, a village six miles from Northampton, on the Bedford road. It is of limestone and circular; there are three "set-backs" to the walls, the uppermost alone being provided with a string-course. The roof and its cupola date from the middle of the last century, but the building is much older. The doorway on the south is almost square, three feet six inches high, three inches less in breadth.

Isham, a village lying between Wellingborough and Kettering, possesses an interesting seventeenth-century dovecote, rectangular in shape, and having its massive walls built with a slight "batter." The heavy door, thickly studded with nails, is worth noting, and the whole building is maintained in good repair.

NEWTON-IN-THE-WILLOWS, NORTHANTS

Face p. 104.

It is still tenanted by a few birds.

Externally there is but little special interest apparent in the circular cupola-crowned dovecote standing near the mill at Warmington, a village between Oundle and Peterborough, three miles from the former place; though we shall notice that its "Colly Weston" roof is of a pleasant hue. Internally, this building, dating from the seventeenth century, has features which demand attention.

Even the door detains us on our way within. It has two locks, the upper one of modern make. The lower lock, probably as old as the building whose occupants it was its office to secure, is of very elaborate construction. It is contained in an oak case, well ornamented with iron-work. There is a double key-hole with two separate bolts. The key, when inserted and turned in the usual way, unlocks the upper bolt. The lower bolt is withdrawn by both the position of the key and the direction in which it is turned being reversed.

The woodwork of the roof is original, the main supports being two horizontal beams which cross in the centre. From each of these

rises a curved piece of timber, on which is supported a circle of wood to which the rafters are fixed.

The potence is still in complete order. The massive upright post, six inches by four in section, is pivoted in a wooden block in the floor and to the cross-beams which support the roof. It carries a sixteen-rung ladder, which is strengthened by diagonal struts.

But it is the construction of the nests which presents the chief internal feature of this dovecote. Two feet above the floor the walls are corbelled, a shelf six inches wide being formed. From this shelf rise perpendicular slabs of wood, fixed to the wall at distances nine inches apart. Similar slabs rise from the floor, in front of those upon the shelf. These uprights are connected by round wooden pegs, placed horizontally, and long enough to project beyond the front row. Upon these pegs flat boards are laid to form the nest-floors, with upright boards to serve as the dividing walls. The whole arrangement was then covered with some kind of mortar or cement, a ledge being formed in front of every tier. Such an arrangement as here seen is most

unusual, possibly unique.

At Burton Latimer, three miles from Kettering, is a plain but well-built dovecote, almost identical in size and general form with that at Isham. It offers no feature of special interest; and the explorer will do well to turn his steps towards Dallington, a village but a little distance from Northampton, on the Rugby road. Here, in the grounds of Dallington House, upon the bank of a small stream, and reached through a fine avenue of elms and chestnuts, he will find one of the few octagonal dovecotes which the county offers. Dallington House, it should be noted, was built about 1720 by Sir Joseph Jekyll, Master of the Rolls, on the site of a manor-house which was once the home of Lord Chief Justice Raynsford. The dovecote was most probably erected at the same time as the present mansion.

It is a somewhat ornate, yet massive building, covered by an eight-sided ogee roof, the whole crowned by an octagonal lantern. This lantern is lead-covered, the angles of the roof of Colly Weston slabs being likewise lead-protected. The walls, two feet three inches thick, are of

worked ashlar, with the corner-stones of rustic work. The door, six feet in height, but less than three feet wide, has evidently been enlarged; and two out of three windows are certainly modern. The house, containing over thirteen hundred nest-holes, is now empty, and the holes by which the birds once entered have been closed.

Finally, a rather interesting dovecote is to be seen at Mears Ashby, or Ashby Mares, a pleasant village about eight miles from Northampton, on the Wellingborough road. It stands upon a sloping bank immediately to the east of the fine old Elizabethan hall, a building on the porch and leaden water-pipes of which appears the date 1637.

The dovecote is rectangular, with slightly "battered" walls some three feet thick. On both the east and west sides is a little window, with a semicircular alighting-ledge immediately in front. The roof is topped by a small wooden lantern, with nine panes of glass in each of the four sides.

Here, as so frequently elsewhere, the doorway deserves attention. Its outside measure-

ments are four feet high, by two feet ten inches wide; but the actual space between the sill and lintel is but three feet, and between the side-posts one foot eleven inches.

Passing now into Buckinghamshire we find several dovecotes of interest. At Haversham, in a field east of the Manor House, is a seventeenth-century example of stone; square, with a pyramid-shaped tiled roof, surmounted by a good oaken lantern. A panel in the north wall bears the legend "1665 M.T." The dovecote is still fitted with nests, and, unlike some others in the county, is in good repair.

At Clifton Reynes is, or lately was, a circular dovecote, the walls of which have a slight set-off near the top. The thatched roof is crowned by a small lantern. Nests are fitted in the thickness of the walls. But the whole building was, a short time back, in such dilapidation that it may have been pulled down.

At Church Farm, Edlesborough, there exists, in company with a sixteenth-century barn and the remains of a moat, a square brick dovecote built in the late seventeenth century, with a tiled roof, and fitted with brick nests. To the

south of Great Linford Rectory, a building some four centuries old, is a square example of stone, with a pyramid-tiled roof and a lantern. Inside, the nest-holes are intact.

At Tathall End Farm, Hanslope, adjoining the north end of the house, is a good square dovecote, built of stone rubble. Nests, with alighting-ledges, still remain within the upper floor; the age of the building is settled by the "T.B. 1602" which may be read over the doorway in the eastern wall.

At Newton Longueville is a manor-house built upon the site of a Cluniac priory. A dovecote stands in a field east of the house; it dates from the early sixteenth century, and is of somewhat unusual construction for this neighbourhood. Its walls are of vertical timber framing, closely set; the intervals between the uprights, formerly filled in with plaster, are now closed with bricks. There is a tiled roof with a skylight, and the house is fitted with oak nests.

Stewkley possesses both a "Manor Farm" and "Dovecote Farm"; but it is at the former that we find a dovecote standing at a few yards' distance from the house. It is an interesting

specimen of early eighteenth-century work; brick, and octagonal in form. The bricks are laid in what is known to builders as the "Flemish bond," the "headers"—those bricks, namely, which present their ends to view—being black and arranged to form a diamond pattern. The dormer window and the lantern in the roof are both modern. The string-course round the walls is made of moulded bricks, while pilasters adorn the angles. The doorway has a segmental head. Immediately above it, on a plaster panel framed in moulded brick, are the initials and

H.

date, G. A.

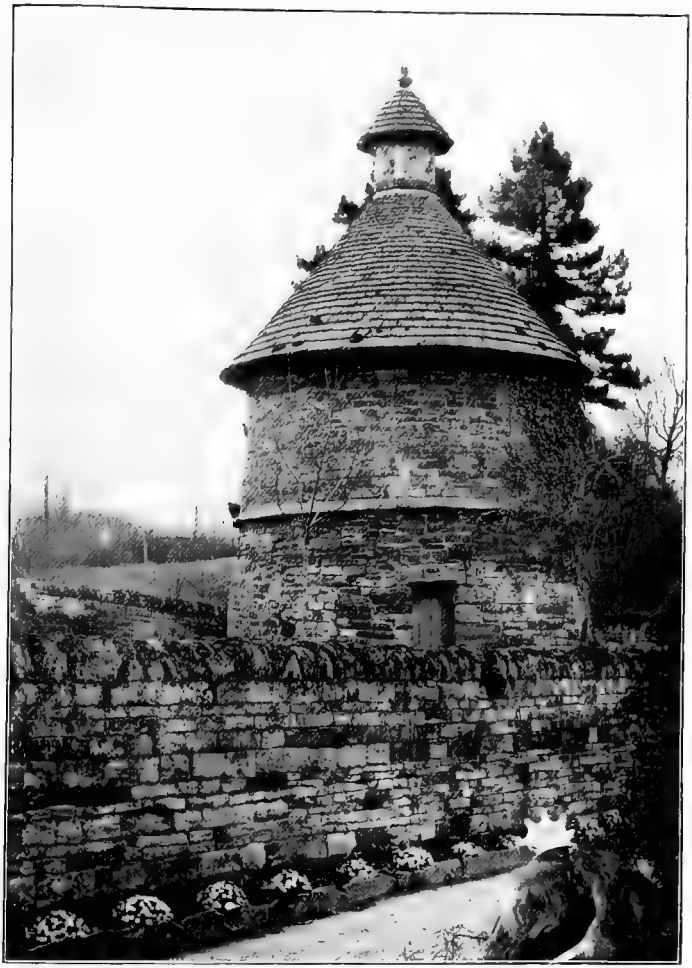
1704.

In Whitchurch, at a house in a lane south of the church, we find a Buckinghamshire example of pigeons being accommodated in a dwelling. In the north gable of this house are two rows of entrance-holes. Again, at Cuddington, the village club has taken possession of what was formerly Tyringham Hall, a house constructed in the seventeenth century. In one of the attics may be seen some nest-holes built of brick.

At Burnham Abbey, a little south of the main

buildings, is a good sixteenth-century dovecote; square, and built of two and a quarter inch bricks. The doorway is modern, but below the eaves on the east wall is a curious little window having a three-centred head. The roof is thatched, and hipped on all four sides.

Finally, a dovecote with fittings of unusual style stands in the grounds of the thirteenth-century Notley Abbey, at Long Crendon. It is a good-sized building of stone, square, with a tiled hipped roof, and is seemingly a survival from the Middle Ages. But its most striking feature will be found within. Projecting inwards from the walls are shorter walls, all fitted with nest-holes. This arrangement, obviously economical of space, permits of provision for between four and five thousand pairs of birds. One is inclined to wonder why this method of obtaining much additional accommodation was not oftener used. The only possible objection which occurs is that of overcrowding and diminution of air-space, a point on which the medieval builder was not over strict. What is clear is that the plan was seldom followed, this being the only instance so far brought to notice.



HARLESTON, NORTHANTS

Face p 112.

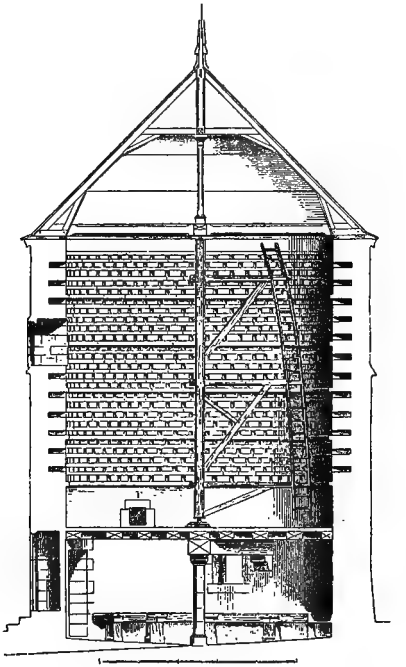
HUNTINGDON

The county of Huntingdon must be passed over with the notice of a solitary but very fine example—that of the beautiful dovecote standing in a small paddock at Grove House, Fenstanton, near St. Ives. It is believed to have been built about a century ago, its form and details being copied from one seen in Italy.

It is remarkable for its height; the dome, supported on six slender pillars, being fifty-two feet from the ground; the weather-vane—a cock—adds four feet more. It is a brick building, circular, with a circumference of some sixty feet. There is a handsome string-course, with some ornamental work beneath the eaves. It has four stories, and provides accommodation for about one thousand pairs of birds. The present occupants are chiefly owls and daws, who, under the genial sway of a bird-loving owner, hold their lofty fortress in unchallenged peace.

At this point, having now explored some parts of the Welsh Border and the Midlands, it may be not uninteresting to record some instances, scattered over various districts, in which pigeons were at one time suffered, even encouraged, to inhabit quarters wholly unconnected with them

in the modern reader's mind. We have already seen them dwell securely in the tower of a church in Worcestershire; even more striking cases may be found elsewhere.



DOVECOTE INTERIOR, SHOWING POTENCE

CHAPTER EIGHT
PIGEONS OF THE CHURCH

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PIGEONS OF THE CHURCH

In that western corner of Gloucestershire which lies between the converging streams of Severn and Wye, and was formerly included in the now shrunken limits of the Forest of Dean, there stands, overlooking the larger of the two rivers, the church of Tidenham, its massive tower a bold landmark visible from far down-stream. The story is told that the Gloucester harbour commissioners once approached the vicar and churchwardens with the following naïve proposal. The tower, they said, was a good guide to mariners upon their way to port; but its utility in this respect would be enormously increased by a periodical coat of whitewash. Might they apply such dressing, and continue so to do from time to time?

The guardians of the church no doubt received the suggestion with something of the indignation shown by the High Church vicar who, in the pages of *Punch*, interrupts a pair of tourists who have lost their way and are endeavouring to locate their whereabouts by the

orientation of the chancel; he tells them that they will discover "an unconsecrated weather-cock upon the barn close by." Yet the application of a church to secular as well as sacred uses was, in old times, very far from being unknown. The tower was frequently used as a watch-station and as a point of vantage whence there might be shown a beacon light. Men slept in churches, feasted in them, even sometimes fought; St. Paul's Cathedral was at once a market-place and public thoroughfare. It need, then, cause no very great surprise to find some portion of a church devoted to the purpose of a pigeon-house.

There is a very interesting Herefordshire instance of this having been the case. Some ten miles west of Hereford, and a short distance from the former market town of Weobley, is the small village of Sarnesfield. The place consists of little but the Court and church, the churchyard opening from the garden of the mansion-house.

The churchyard has more interests than the one with which we are immediately concerned. Close to the timber porch before the church's

entrance-door there is a simple, flat-topped tomb, the legend carved upon it being barely legible to-day, but recorded as follows:

This craggy stone a covering is for an Architector's bed,
That lofty buildings raised high, yet now lyes low his head;
His rule and line, so death concludes, are now locked up in store;
Build they who list, or they who wist, for he can build no more.

His house of clay could hold no longer,
May Heaven's joy frame him a stronger.

JOHN ABEL.

Vive ut vivas in vitam aeternam.

The inscription is stated to have been composed by the man who lies below; of his own designing were the kneeling figures of himself and of his first and second wives, together with the compass, rule, and square, as symbols of his craft.

Nor is this old, time-weathered tomb quite foreign to the matter which concerns us here. John Abel, who, a native of Herefordshire, was born in 1597 and survived till 1694, was famous in his day and generation as an architect. He was "King's Carpenter"; and, more to our purpose, was the designer of so many of those

timber buildings of which the county is most justly proud. He is said to have built the old market-hall of Hereford, now, alas! a thing of the past; and he rendered valuable services to the city in 1645, when it was besieged by the Scottish army, by constructing corn-mills. Full many a delightful cottage and farmhouse in "black and white" was probably John Abel's work; nor is it unreasonable to attribute to him some of the half-timbered dovecotes still to be seen in the district—notably perhaps the charming specimen already visited at Butt House, King's Pyon, dated 1632, when Abel would be in the prime of life.

But for the moment we are now concerned with a date earlier than John Abel's time, and with material far more durable than that with which he mostly worked. Our business is with the small tower of the church itself. Its height from ground to wall-plate is but little over thirty feet, and its internal measurement is only eight feet square. The walls are massive, being some three feet thick.

About twenty years ago, Mr. George Marshall, the owner of Sarnesfield Court, noticed,

TWO PIGEONS ON A ROOF

while examining the interior surface of the tower walls, a number of holes observable in their upper portion. These he at first took to be niches in which the joists of a former belfry chamber had been inserted, but closer study soon dispelled this first surmise. The openings were all uniform in size—six inches square; the holes entered the walls at an angle, and they enlarged gradually until a depth of from fifteen to eighteen inches was reached. There are six tiers of holes in each of the four walls, the usual number of the holes in every tier being four, though there are sometimes five; one or two occur also on either side of the lancet windows. Below each tier of holes there is a stone alighting-ledge.

There cannot be the slightest doubt that these were nests for pigeons; not adapted to such purpose as an after-thought, but planned and executed when the tower was built. As the tower dates from the first half of the thirteenth century this remarkable dovecôte must be given rank as perhaps the oldest in the county—older by half a century at least than that which stands by Garway church. That it was not the

only pigeon-house in the parish seems suggested by the name Pigeon-house Meadow in an ancient document; but any traces of the dovecote there alluded to will now be sought in vain.

Very similar accommodation for pigeons occurs in the church tower at Collingbourne Ducis, Wiltshire, and it is probable that many other instances exist to which attention has not yet been drawn. The real purpose of such holes as those at Sarnesfield might quite easily elude the observer, who would regard them as "putlock-holes," made to receive the ends of horizontal timbers used in scaffolding, temporary or otherwise.

In several cases a pigeon-house existed, sometimes still exists, in parts of a church other than the tower. At Hellesdon, near Norwich, there was a wooden pigeon-cote placed on the west gable of the church. Pigeons formerly occupied the tower at Monk's Bretton, Yorkshire; Birlingham, Worcestershire; and Gumfreston in Pembrokeshire; nor do these instances entirely exhaust the list. We know that pigeons nested in the bell-tower at Ensham, Oxfordshire, in former days; for in 1388 a man en-

gaged in catching some of them fell down into the choir and was killed. During the reign of Henry III. a certain John of Hertford, who "carried Holy Water at Denham (Bucks), when he wished to drive out some pigeons from a certain lantern at the church of Denham, outside the same church, let fall a stone from that lantern upon the head of Agnes, wife of Robert de Denham, who was sitting in the church, so that the third day she died." Again, in 1375 the vicar of Kingston-on-Thames was judged entitled to all pigeons bred in the church and its chapels.

Adjoining the west end of the now ruinous church of Portpatrick, Wigtownshire, and slightly encroaching on its western wall, there is a curious small round tower. The walls are over three feet thick, and the internal diameter about nine feet. The lower portion seems much older than the upper part, from which it is divided by a string-course. The slated roof, a truncated cone in shape, is topped by a small pigeon-cote.

In 1670 a door was placed at the top of the steeple at Wilmslow church, Cheshire, in order

to "keepe forth the Piggens from Fowleinge the church." The door seems to have failed in its duty, for five years later a net is bought for the same purpose. This apparently succeeded no better, and finally, in 1688, the drastic step was taken of expending twopence on "shott and powder" to exterminate the birds.

Though it seems certain that Sarnesfield church tower was originally built in such fashion as to include its utility as a dovecote, later arrangements were in some cases made to the same end. At Elkstone, near Cheltenham, a chamber over the chancel shows clear traces of having been so adapted, the forty odd nesting-places now seen being evidently a late addition. The birds flew in and out by way of an unglazed lancet window.

A like case existed at the church of St. Peter, Marlborough, where the dovecote, a chamber over the chancel, had a groined stone roof. Here pigeons nested until towards the middle of the nineteenth century. To the same recent period extended the custom of allowing pigeons the use of a room above the vaulting of the church at Overbury, Worcestershire. Four centuries

ago the pigeons which frequented Yarmouth parish church had their headquarters over one of the chapels.

Doubtless the custom would die hard, yielding reluctantly before a growing reverence for the fabric of the place. The cooing of doves above his chancel would have sadly vexed the spirit of a certain cleric who one day exhibited his church to a chance visitor. Quite suddenly his steady flow of information ceased. It was a sunny autumn morning, the church door stood open, and a little robin had flown boldly in, doubtless attracted by the decorations for the coming Harvest Festival. It fluttered happily from place to place, uttering those autumn notes so sadly sweet; and presently it perched upon the very altar, innocent and unafraid.

In utmost consternation the now agitated vicar harried the intruder up and down and here and there; till, seeming to understand at length how very far from welcome was its presence, the discouraged bird departed by the way it came.

The churchman had perhaps never heard the

story of the city arms of Glasgow—Robin Redbreast on a silver shield—memorial of the deed of healing wrought by St. Mungo on the bird's behalf; nor might a man who chased away a robin be inclined to take the legend as excuse. For his sake it is perhaps as well that pigeons nest no more above our English chancels, and that the church tower harbours none but owls and jackdaws as its uninvited but still tolerated guests.

CHAPTER NINE
LANCASHIRE, WESTMORLAND, AND CUMBERLAND

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LANCASHIRE, WESTMORLAND, AND CUMBERLAND

RESUMING our pilgrimage and turning to the north, a pause must be made in Lancashire to notice a dovecote at Meols Hall, Churchtown, near Southport. It is of interest as being one of those oblong buildings containing two compartments, a specimen of which we have already noticed in Northamptonshire, and which we shall find common in Scotland.

Of the Meols dovecote one compartment is in ruins, and the roof of the whole building has fallen. The compartment still standing has an internal measurement of fourteen feet by twelve, and contains nearly four hundred L-shaped nest-holes. Its age is not definitely known; but the present mansion of Meols Hall stands on the site of a much older house; and the owner, whose family has been settled on the spot since 1180, tells us that a second dovecote formerly existed on a farm of the estate, but was demolished towards the end of the last

century.

In Westmorland the farm of Nether Levens, near Milnthorpe, will show two dovecotes, both standing in the farmyard. The largest is about twenty-seven feet square by twenty-five feet high to the eaves, has a ridge-roof, and is divided into an upper and lower story. The nest-holes have been largely filled up within recent years, and the door enlarged.

The second dovecote, also square but smaller, has a pyramid roof, with a stone ball upon the top. Like its neighbour, it has suffered a good deal of alteration. Both buildings are of stone.

Crossing from Westmorland to Cumberland, we are in a district of much interest to the dovecote-hunter, and our survey of the county's specimens may well begin with the interesting example standing in the grounds of the mansion of Hutton-i'-the-Forest. Its present position is in a plantation of trees; this, we may be sure, was non-existent when the dovecote was erected, for pigeons do not like a tree-surrounded home—one reason being probably the difficulty of seeing where it lies.

The dovecote is an octagonal building of dressed ashlar, similar to that of the mansion itself, which was built from designs by Inigo Jones at intervals during the last forty years of the seventeenth century. The dovecote had been long neglected, till, some fifty years ago, attention was called to its interest by a guest staying in the house, when it was put into repair.

The potence, though without the ladder, still remains, together with about four hundred and fifty nest-holes. These are L-shaped, nine inches high, five inches broad at the entrance, and penetrating nine inches into the wall, the right-angled recess adding another ten inches. The lowest of the twelve tiers in which they are arranged is four feet from the floor, and immediately before it is a ledge six inches broad. This was evidently intended as a safeguard against rats, as the remaining ledges—one to every tier of nests—are only half the breadth. The octagonal roof is surmounted by a small lantern or "glover."

Wreay Hall has, on one of its farms, a dovecote, likewise octagonal, of dressed ashlar, and

rather similar to the Hutton example. Fourteen tiers, the lowest two feet from the ground, contain about five hundred nests. The potence, or a remnant of it, is in place, and presents an unusual feature in being surrounded by a ledge or shelf. The purpose of this, if purpose there were other than to provide a finish or ornament, is hardly clear.

A third octagonal dovecote will be found at High Head Castle, near Carlisle. It is of very modest size, the external measurement of each wall being only seven feet four inches. The lowest tier of nests, three feet above the ground, is, as at Hutton, provided with a six-inch ledge in front, in this case formed of very massive stone. The building seems to be of early eighteenth-century date.

At Bunker's Hill is a very large circular dovecote, built of rubble stone, and visible from far. The field in which it stands is known as Pigeon Cote Field. The nests, numbering between five and six hundred, are L-shaped, built of brick, and arranged in fourteen tiers. The lowest tier is at the unusual height of more than seven feet above the floor; but the lower part of the

building has been long used as a cattle shed, and it is very possible that formerly existing lower tiers have been removed. The dovecote is of considerable height, and sixteen feet in internal diameter; there is an open cupola upon the roof.

At Rose Castle, the episcopal palace of the diocese, we find a square dovecote. A stone above the doorway bears the date 1700, at which time Bishop Smith, a well-known benefactor to the diocese, was holder of the see; but a survey taken in the days of the Commonwealth speaks of a dovecote of "hewn stone," and it is probable that the Bishop merely executed some repairs. The building is eighteen feet nine inches square, and twenty feet high to a heavy cornice which entirely surrounds the house. The L-shaped nests, numbering about eight hundred and arranged in fifteen tiers, commence nine inches from the ground and are provided with alighting-ledges.

A dovecote presenting features of special interest stands at the hamlet of Parsonby Green, in the parish of Plumbland. It is nearly, although not quite square. The lower portion

was converted to the purpose of a coach-house several years ago, and a large modern doorway has been made in the north wall. The original entrance, now built up, is on the south, and very small—four feet three inches high, and less than two feet wide. A single stone forms the sill, another the lintel, and both these and the jambs are broadly chamfered. The roof has been renewed.

Apart from the old doorway the chief interest lies within. The nests, once numbering about six hundred, are plain oblong recesses, but of unusually massive construction. They are built of stones six inches thick by fourteen inches square. A tier of these was laid with intervals of six inches between them, and the rows above added in the same way, the stones of one tier covering the intervals in that below. Each nest was thus six inches broad, six inches high, and fourteen inches deep. Nearly eight hundred of these massive slabs of stone, all cut to the same size, were used; and the labour and cost involved, even in times when the hand of toil might be secured for a few daily pence, must have been very considerable. The nests

are now perfect only on the east and west sides of the house. The lowest tier is practically level with the ground. The tiers have no alighting-ledges, save that the east and west sides have, some four feet from the floor, a three-inch ledge.

Another square dovecote of interest occurs at Crookdale Hall, Bromfield. The shape is very nearly square, with sides of about eighteen feet, and a height of sixteen feet. The entrance for the occupants was provided by two oval apertures, placed half-way between the eaves and a broad string-course; one faces north, the other to the east. The east and west ends, which are gabled, have as ornament a ball of stone, and on each angle of the building is an urn-shaped finial. The original roofing material has perished, and is replaced by red tiles. The nest-holes, oblong recesses, are of unusually large dimensions—fifteen inches deep, nine inches broad, ten inches high. They are vertically above each other, have no alighting-ledges, and are built of massive flags of stone. The dovecote is of rubble, with dressed quoins.

This dovecote dates from the end of the

seventeenth century, an inscription above the door running as follows:

Sr. I. B. (small heart) A. B. 1686.

The same heart is to be seen on an oak pew in Bromfield church. The initials are those of Sir John Ballantyne and his wife Anne, a daughter of the Musgrave family.

This dovecote has been much altered, a new window having been made in the south wall, and a fireplace and chimney inserted on the east. These conveniences were introduced at some date prior to the early nineteenth century, at which time the dovecote was in use as a school-house. And at this school George Moore, draper, fox-hunter, and philanthropist, whose life was made the subject of a volume by the worthy Samuel Smiles, received a portion of his scanty education.

Moore had been first sent to school at Bolton Gate, where his master was one "Blackbird Wilson," a person of drunken habits and drastic educational methods, but blessed with a melodious whistle which had earned for him his common name. Moore's father, a Cumberland dalesman, paid six shillings and sixpence a

quarter for the boy's share of this pedagogue's instructions, but later transferred him to the care of one Pedlar Thommy, who had exchanged the calling of a wandering merchant for that of schoolmaster, and had established his headquarters in the Crookdale pigeon-house.

In a field behind the vicarage at Aspatria is a quadrangular dovecote about twelve feet square, built of rubble, and roughcast. As in the Crookdale specimen, a ledge surrounds the outside of the walls at six feet from the ground. The door has been enlarged; the nest-holes, formed of blocks of stone, and vertically over one another, are eight inches square by one foot deep. They begin at the ground level and have no alighting-ledges.

Unhappily this dovecote is at present in a grievous case. It is now quickly falling into ruin; and, owing to an uncertainty as to the shoulders upon which should fall the duty—and the cost—of its repair, there seems at present every prospect of its being soon numbered with the many dovecotes which have "disappeared." It is particularly unsuitable that Cumberland, a county where the dovecotes have been

so carefully chronicled, should now risk losing such a good example.

Yet another fine stone dovecote stands at Great Blencowe Farm, near Penrith. Internally it measures about ten feet square. The height to the eaves is eighteen feet, and the roof, forming a four-sided prism, is topped by a stone ball, from which projects an iron spike. The building is two-storied, the upper chamber having a semicircular entrance for the birds. In the room below an ovoid aperture is placed on either side of the doorway. Above the door the initials W. T., with the date 1789, are sunk in the stone, the letters evidently standing for one William Troutbeck, formerly a dweller at the farm.

The wooden floor of the upper chamber is comparatively modern, but replaces one of older date. The nest-holes are built of perpendicular tiers of bricks, their floors being sandstone slabs. In the lower room recesses of a different shape were clearly designed to meet the needs of poultry of various sizes; an upper tier being about three feet from the ground, while that below has nests large enough for geese and

turkeys.

At Corby Castle—that Corby whose atoning charms David Hume recorded in the following verse, scratched on the window of a Carlisle inn :

> Here chicks in eggs for breakfast sprawl,
> Here godless boys God's glories squall,
> Here Scotchmen's heads do guard the wall,
> But Corby's walks atone for all.

—at Corby, on a slope above the castle, is a dove-cote which, although the lover of these buildings may regard it with some satisfaction as a curiosity, is not one such as he would care to meet too often in his pilgrimage. It is a highly ornate structure in the form of a Doric temple, a little over twenty feet square, and having its front elevation adorned by a porch—which leads to nothing, the entrance being at the back. The desire for appearances has overcome the regard for utility in another detail; for, about ten feet above the ground, a ledge runs round three sides, presumably intended as a perching-place and lounge for the birds—a use to which they were effectually prevented from putting it by its being steeply chamfered to a slope.

Inside, it being no longer needful to adhere to classical design, things are more sensibly arranged. The nests, L-shaped, are placed upon each wall in fourteen tiers, fourteen in every tier. Each tier is furnished with its own alighting-ledge.

Finally, though the dovecote is rectangular, there is a potence, and a somewhat elaborate one. The upright beam, twenty feet high, carries three cross-arms, each seventeen feet long and projecting upon either side. On these are borne two ladders, as was frequently the case in France; while the middle arm of the three also supports a horizontal platform about six feet square. Something of the same arrangement is occasionally seen in other dovecotes, but its purpose is not very obvious.

The Corby Castle dovecote is a late example, dating from about a century ago; it was doubtless built in 1813, when the mansion was restored in Grecian Doric style. It is almost equally certain that the present dovecote is at least the second that has stood at Corby; and very probable that its forerunner was either circular or octagonal, in which case it is easy to

understand that the potence would be deemed a necessary feature of the new building.

Of a dovecote which formerly existed at Naworth Castle, only the spot on which it stood is known. That at Penrith was pulled down thirty years ago to yield to a new road. At Crofton one formerly stood in front of the house, grew to be looked on as disfiguring the landscape, and was ruthlessly destroyed. Near Cockermouth a field is still called Dove Cote Close, and a like name describes a piece of ground near Bootle Rectory.

CHAPTER TEN
YORKSHIRE

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On entering Yorkshire it is natural for our thoughts to turn to Waterton, that eminent naturalist who wrote with equal charm and vigour on so many subjects—vultures, miracles, and Hanoverian rats! We think of him to-day with mingled feelings; for, although he built a dovecote, which is so much to his credit, he pulled down an old one, and who knows what treasure of antiquity he thus destroyed?

That of his own erection occupies the centre of the stable-yard at his old home of Walton Hall; a tall square structure built of stone, with a hipped roof, two dormer windows, and a cupola. The number of the L-shaped nest-holes is three hundred and sixty-five; was this intentional? There is a socket-hole in the floor, which seems to show that he considered a potence of some use in a square house.

Waterton thoroughly understood the business of pigeon-rearing. It may be noted in passing that he derives the term "glover," sometimes applied to the lantern or cupola, from the French *ouvert*, and is very probably correct. He

contradicts the theory of a living Yorkshireman, who attributes the falling-off in the number of birds frequenting his dovecote to the presence of an owl; quite to the contrary, says Waterton, the owl is there, not for the birds, but for the rats, and is regarded by the rightful inmates as a welcome friend. This view, which we sincerely hope may be correct, was greatly valued by that lover of the owl and raven, Bosworth Smith, with whom the reader will come into closer touch before this volume ends.

Before dealing with Yorkshire dovecotes generally, allusion may be made to one or two special features of our subject to be found in that extensive county. No visitor to Darrington, a village in the neighbourhood of Pontefract, which has been described and chronicled by that staunch Yorkshireman, Mr. J. S. Fletcher in his fascinating volume, *Memorials of a Yorkshire Parish*, should leave it without a glance at the old Vicar's Dovecote, one of two the village owns. It is, indeed, no longer either applied to its original purpose, nor in its original form, having been converted into vestries

and a caretaker's dwelling. Nests formerly existed in the upper portion, and a potence was in use. It is a building of large size, and must once have furnished the vicar of Darrington with a food-supply of no small value.

In certain parts of Yorkshire, as in the neighbourhood of Halifax, pigeon-houses proper are less common than what are locally called "pigeon-hoils," usually found forming an upper story to hen- or pig-"hoils"—the word being a north of England term for a hole or shelter. A similar arrangement is frequently found in the gables of barns, and, more curiously, in the gables, and especially the porches, of many houses of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

An example of this occurs at Little Burlees, Wadsworth; another at Kirk Cliff, Soyland, a house dated 1630, where three entrance-holes appear above the low projecting porch; while Eastwood Lee, Stansfield, and Upper Cockroft, Rishworth, exhibit a like provision. The pigeon-holes lead in each case to a low but fairly spacious room, entrance to which is provided inside the dwelling by a trap-door in the

chamber floor.

Turning now to dovecotes in the stricter application of the term, where can one come upon a dovecote more agreeably situated than within the bounds of an old garden? Such a pleasantly placed example offers for inspection in the garden of Fulford Hall, near York. The manor is a very old one, and the present owner is no doubt correct in his surmise that the dovecote now standing, built towards the middle of the eighteenth century, is the successor of an older one.

It is a square substantial structure of red brick, well weathered by a century and half of sun and storm. The length of wall is about twenty feet, the height eighteen. Upon the old red roof is placed a cupola.

Inside are about seven hundred and fifty L-shaped nests, still to some extent occupied by pigeons. They are arranged upon each wall in fourteen tiers, from twelve to fourteen nests in every tier. Alighting-ledges are provided; but, though these project sufficiently to serve as hand- and foot-holds to a person climbing to explore the nests, a potence was formerly pre-

sent, a portion of the upright beam still remaining. In the centre is a small stone slab or table, raised two feet above the ground. This may have been provided as a place on which to deposit a basket of young birds, although it seems rather in the nature of a needless luxury.

Another dovecote in a Yorkshire garden will be found at Rogerthorpe Manor, near Pontefract. It has been modernised to some extent, the nest-holes having been removed, and a floor inserted, dividing the building into an upper fruit-store and a potting-shed. But happily the roof of old stone slabs remains in place, its beauty little lessened by the changes carried out below. The dovecote is an oblong one, some twenty feet in height, and twenty-three feet long by thirteen feet six inches broad.

Few Yorkshire dovecotes enjoy a finer situation than the one we shall find at Barforth Old Hall, close to the Durham border of the county. It stands on the hill-slope, looks down on Barforth Hall, the park, the rippling Tees, and the picturesque village of Gainford in the background; a worthy picture set in an ideal frame. It is a circular building of stone, thirty feet

high to the eaves, and about forty-five in internal circumference. The vaulted roof has a small round central opening. There are two string-courses upon the outer surface of the walls, which are over three feet thick. Inside are some three hundred oblong nest-holes, now untenanted. This dovecote is a very early example, dating probably from the time when the abbey of St. Mary stood upon the ground now occupied by a large farm.

Gainford, had we but time to cross the Tees and enter Durham, would display not a few dovecotes in the neighbourhood; but we must ignore them here, and pass to Snape Castle, near Bedale, where, in the stackyard, stands a stone-built dovecote twenty-six feet square and twenty-two feet high, with walls some three feet thick. The roof of grey slates is broken by a single dormer window, and surmounted by a lantern. The door is two feet six inches wide. Inside are fifteen hundred nest-holes, furnished with alighting-ledges, and to some extent still occupied.

The age of this building is probably very considerable, the date 1414, cut with a joiner's

chisel, having been discovered on the woodwork of the roof a few years back.

There is a ridge-roofed dovecote at Leathley Manor, a few miles from Otley. The middle of the ridge was formerly crowned by a very elegant little ball-topped stone cap, raised on pillars; but recently the effect has been somewhat marred by the removal of the pillars and the lowering of the cap.

Near Wakefield are three dovecotes, two of which are of special interest as standing close to each other. The third, at Huntwick Grange, is about twenty feet square, and nearly eighteen feet high to the eaves. Pigeons—wild "rocks" —frequented it until some years ago, but have forsaken it of late.

The two others stand, one at Sharleston Hall Farm, a house which dates from 1574, and the second little more than one hundred yards away, although on land belonging to another farm. The walls of both are fully three feet thick, and inside each are nests which have alighting-ledges furnished to each tier. Both stand in open fields and both are frequented by wild pigeons.

Remembering the part played by pigeons in bringing about the French Revolution; remembering, too, the modern pigeon-shooting "days," arranged, as we are told, to rid the country of a farmers' pest, it may surprise us to observe how often pigeons are still tolerated, perhaps encouraged, in their former dwellings, even when the dovecote is upon a farm. Pigeons, we see, are kept at Fulford Hall and at Snape Castle; while at Sharleston and the neighbouring farm the dovecotes shelter some two hundred birds. Is, then, the pigeon such a foe to farming as has been believed?

In answer to a question on this point a Yorkshire farmer writes as follows—and the agriculturists of Yorkshire are not usually regarded as being either fools or failures:

"The ravages on crops by pigeons, crows, etc., are no doubt very serious at times. On more than one occasion I have had large pieces of wheat practically ruined by crows. At times in midwinter I have shot a few pigeons, and their crops are always gorged by what are probably weed seeds. In my opinion the harm done for short periods in the year is more than

PIGEON-HOIL OVER PORCH (LITTLE BURLEES), YORKSHIRE

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made up for during the longer period when they are doing good in many ways. A good old motto is 'Live and Let Live.'"

No doubt all pigeons feed to a large extent on grain, but the diet of some kinds at least comprises the seeds of many weeds. No one would suggest a return to the six-and-twenty thousand well-stocked dovecotes of four centuries ago; but there is no saying what revenge the whirligig of time may not bring round. A day may come when dovecotes falling into ruin will be repaired, when architectural journals will give plans and elevations of "desirable" dovecotes, and the village carpenter add potence-making to the numerous branches of his trade.

At Marske-by-the-Sea, on the estate of the Marquis of Zetland, is an interesting octagonal brick dovecote, with a slated roof of the same shape; in one side of the roof is a small dormer window with nine entrance-holes, arranged in rows of three. It is a large building, each wall measuring eleven feet, while to the eaves the height is twenty-four feet. There is a string-course half-way up the walls.

Inside, about one thousand nests are arranged in twenty-two tiers, the lowest row being four feet six inches from the floor. From a pillar three feet high, placed in the centre, rises the beam of the potence, which still retains its ladder. The walls are nearly three feet thick; and, as in certain dovecotes we shall later see—though not to such a marked extent as in some cases—the surface of the floor is well below the level of the ground outside.

CHAPTER ELEVEN
ESSEX AND SUFFOLK

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THE late Mr. Harry Quilter, in a rather "quaint and curious" volume which he styled *What's What*, has left on record his disapprobation of the county of Essex, which he describes as an "undesirable locality" in which to buy or rent a country house. His objections seem to have been founded chiefly on an inconvenient railway service from London, and the presence of a clay soil when the difficulties of transit have been overcome; with, among other unattractive features, a scanty population, out-at-elbows as regards the upper classes, dull and suspicious in the lower strata of society.

These animadversions strike us as what Mr. Perker would have called "harsh words." The county is less unattractive than the tints on Mr. Quilter's palette would incline one to believe. Objections to it there may be; it is sufficient to the present purpose that Essex yields us a good store of dovecotes.

One of the most interesting is certainly that which stands near the stables at Dynes Hall, a house near Great Maplestead. It is of timber

framing, with a lath and plaster filling-in; eighteen feet square, and twenty feet high to the eaves. The tiled roof is a truncated pyramid, crowned by a wooden cupola of somewhat unusual form; it has four windows of a pleasing shape, each set in its own gable. This is probably an addition of later date than the dovecote itself, which, from an allusion to it in an old document, appears to have existed in 1575.

The chief attraction is within. On the side facing the door are one hundred and eighty-four nest-holes. Of these, those in the upper tiers, numbering about one hundred, are of wood; the eighty-four below are made of clay, and are for the most part in very good condition. Internal measurements give a cube of about one foot, and each is entered by a rounded hole in one corner. Thirty-seven similar nests still survive in the left-hand wall, and there appear to have been more.

There is no potence, but its place is taken by a wooden table, five feet high and four feet square. There are also four high posts, each connected to its neighbours by two rails, and furnished with projecting wooden pegs. The rails and

pegs were doubtless perching-places, though the arrangement is unusual; and it is possible that the table was formerly the scene of such operations as killing, plucking, and general preparation of birds for the table—or perhaps more probably of packing them for market.

A somewhat similar platform, which the owner of the dovecote thinks was perhaps intended as a means by which to reach the upper nests, occurs at Chelmshoe House, Castle Hedingham. The dovecote is a square brick building standing in an orchard. It is no longer occupied, and nests, to the number of two hundred and fifty, remain on one wall only.

Another example is to be seen in the yard of a house in the main street of Newport. This is a square brick structure, with tiled roof. The L-shaped nest-holes still remain, but otherwise there is no very striking point of interest save that which makes it worthy of brief mention here—the occurrence of a dovecote of considerable size in the centre of a town.

At Great Bardfield, near Braintree, in a field called Dovecote Meadow, is another dovecote of that timber framing and lath and plaster

filling-in, of which Essex offers several specimens. It forms a cube of about eighteen feet each way, with a tiled roof and a small cupola. Inside are over seven hundred L-shaped nests, with potence and ladder. The house—Great Bardfield Hall—to which the field and dovecote now belong, has a long history, culminating in its ownership by the trustees of Guy's Hospital. The dovecote is most likely of Elizabethan date.

The Deanery at Bocking, also near Braintree, has a dovecote of which the lower story seems to have been long in use as a coach-house. Now standing in a garden, it at one time formed part of other farmyard buildings. It is of unusually large size, being a cube of thirty feet; is built of brick and timber, and may with safety be attributed to Tudor days. The roof is tiled, with a small dormer entrance at the top. The inside of the walls is lined with clay, in which the L-shaped nests are formed.

In the farmyard at Wendon Lofts Hall, near Saffron Walden, is an octagonal brick dovecote of large size, the total height being nearly forty feet, and the diameter more than twenty. It

contains nearly eight hundred L-shaped nests, with potence and ladder complete.

Another typical Essex example in timber and lath and plaster is found in the garden of a house called The Moat, Gestingthorpe. It is nearly square, about sixteen by fifteen feet; contains neither nest-holes nor pigeons; and is probably of rather later date than the fifteenth-century house to which it belongs.

At Tiptofts, Saffron Walden, a farm which, just three centuries and a half ago, was presented by Lord Mordaunt to Brazenose College, Oxford, in support of scholarships, there is a brick dovecote fourteen feet square. The roof is of a curious form, its slope being broken at one end by a gable. Many of the nests have disappeared, but those remaining are L-shaped.

At Little Braxted Hall, near Witham, is a square wooden dovecote, largely constructed of oak and placed on a brick foundation. The tiles on the roof are of a very old type, but it is hardly safe to dogmatise upon the question of its age.

Other Essex examples include the one at

Farnham Rectory, near Bishops Stortford, built chiefly of wood, and of sufficient antiquity to have bestowed the name of Dovecote Pond upon a neighbouring piece of water.

Suffolk must be passed over with the bare mention of the so-called "dovecote," the remains of which will be seen among the abbey ruins at Bury St. Edmunds. It would be an interesting example had we any proof that it was ever applied to the purpose suggested by its common local name; for it is of that unusual shape, a hexagon. But no such evidence exists. About twenty feet of the tower remain, the length of each wall of the hexagon being nine feet six inches. The walls are two feet six inches thick; at a height of about ten feet are the remains of a perpendicular window. Of any sign that it was formerly a dovecote there is none.

CHAPTER TWELVE
DOVECOTES NEAR LONDON

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SHOULD the Londoner feel himself aggrieved at the comparatively small number of dovecotes mentioned as being easily accessible from town, he is offered as consolation the following assurance—that one of the very finest examples to be seen in England stands awaiting him within a railway run of half an hour. In describing one or two dovecotes to be seen in Berkshire, Hertfordshire, and Kent, right of priority is justly due to the splendid old building standing at Ladye Place, a house in the parish of Hurley, near Marlow.

Its situation well becomes it, Hurley being a place of great antiquity. When the ninth century was on the point of ending it was traversed by the Danes upon their way from Essex into Gloucestershire. Its manor, once possessed by Edward the Confessor's master of the horse, was later bestowed on a De Mandeville as a reward for distinguished conduct at the Battle of Hastings; and in 1086 De Mandeville and his wife founded the priory of St. Mary as a

cell to the great Benedictine house at Westminster. Never a large house, Hurley, at the moment of the Dissolution, had but eight monks, in addition to its prior.

The Lovelace family, connections of the poet and cavalier, then came into its ownership, and were succeeded by the sister of a bishop, who purchased it with the proceeds of a prize gained in a lottery. Still later came the brother of that Kempenfeldt who perished in the *Royal George*, and who himself had helped to plant a laurel alley at the place. Finally, early in the present century, Ladye Place came into the hands of the present owner, who built the house now seen, and to whose interesting pamphlet concerning it, as also to his kindly help in other ways, this account is largely indebted.

Everything at Ladye Place is of interest; the very charming house itself, the subterranean chamber, the old fish-ponds, and the stately cedars on the lawns. But we must turn our back on all except the dovecote, standing in its field beside a splendid tithe-barn and another building scarcely less in size.

It is a circular stone structure, eighty-eight

feet in circumference, and twenty-three feet high to the eaves. The walls, three feet eight inches thick, are buttressed in four places. The four buttresses are on the north, south, east, and west respectively, and are carried up the full height of the walls.

The door, five feet in height by two feet six inches broad, has jambs and lintel of a later period than the walls; indeed upon the lintel is the date 1642, with C. R.—standing, almost certainly, for Carolus Rex. Immediately above the doorway is a blocked-up pointed arch. The roof is cone-shaped, with a small square cupola upon the top.

Inside we find six hundred L-shaped nests of chalk, arranged in fifteen tiers; the eighth row is the only one with an alighting-ledge, though there are other ledges quite irregularly placed. A potence is still in position.

The date usually assigned to this most interesting building is 1307, though the grounds for such precision are not clear. But there is little doubt that it is hardly, if at all inferior in antiquity to the Herefordshire example at Garway, or to the lost treasure at Bosbury. A vault-

ed roof, as seen at Garway and elsewhere, may quite well have existed formerly and been replaced by that now seen. The dovecote-lover may congratulate himself, not only on the Hurley dovecote, but upon the knowledge that it is in careful hands.

Standing on the lawn at Place Manor, Streatley, is a fine circular stone dovecote nearly eighty feet in circumference. The roof, of tiles, is topped by a square cupola, and has a single dormer window. The walls are three feet eight inches thick, and the arched doorway five feet high by rather more than two feet wide. The oaken door appears to be original. Inside there is a potence, also three hundred and fifty nest-holes.

Turning now to Hertfordshire, we find an octagonal brick dovecote of unusual size at Walkern Manor Farm, near Stevenage. The height to eaves is twenty feet, while each of the eight faces is twelve feet in length. The walls, however, are but fourteen inches thick. The tiled roof is crowned by a small open cupola of rather elegant form, which covers a central opening. More than five hundred plain oblong nest-

LADYE PLACE, HURLEY, BERKS

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holes are contained in the upper story of the building, the lower chamber being a granary.

At Cottered, in the same county, is a square brick dovecote standing in an orchard, with tiled roof, its dormer windows now filled in. It is debased into a store for apples, and few details are to be obtained. Another Hertfordshire dovecote will be found at the Hall Farm, Little Wymondley—a brick building, with a half-hipped gabled roof; while a fourth, a small seventeenth-century structure of brick and timber, is at Norcott Court, near Northchurch.

On the other side of London a particularly charming dovecote, not only delightful in itself, but attractive from its situation and associations, offers itself for notice at the house known as East Court, Detling, near Maidstone. East Court is built upon the site of an old pilgrims' "rest-house," demolished about eighty years ago. The pilgrims' way to Canterbury from Southampton passed close by the charming old walled garden, and it is upon this long deserted path the dovecote now looks down.

It never looked upon the pilgrims who went by, weary yet eager for the shrine they sought,

for it is hardly earlier in date than Jacobean times; a square brick building, roofed with old flat tiles. The pyramidal roof is broken by three dormer windows, and a zinc-topped cupola surmounts the whole. The dovecote's form is nearly cubical; the walls eleven feet high, eleven feet four inches square. Inside there are about two hundred L-shaped nests. The tiers commence four feet above the earthen floor, which is upon a lower level than the ground outside.

Another pleasant Kentish dovecote is found at East Farleigh, also near the county town. It is circular, built of stone rubble, with tiled roof. The walls, twenty-six feet high to the eaves, are four feet thick at the ground level, gradually diminishing to three feet at the top—a plan not very common. The diameter is fourteen feet. The building has a string-course halfway up.

The deep-eaved roof contains four dormer windows, and is crowned by a square cupola. The weather-vane this carries is pierced with "J. A. 1674," but the building itself is certainly of greater age. Inside there are eight tiers of L-shaped nest-holes, twenty-nine nests to a tier.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
SUSSEX, HAMPSHIRE, AND WILTSHIRE

CHAPTER THIRTEEN
SUSSEX, HAMPSHIRE, AND WILTSHIRE

THE vanished Herefordshire dovecote of Bosbury had, as was pointed out, strong claims for its inclusion in the record given here. But it was not unique, others of its kind remaining. This, unhappily, is not the case with one about to be described, and the vandalism which permitted the destruction of a building absolutely unique should not go unrecorded and uncensured.

Towards the close of the eighteenth century the dovecote which then stood among the ruins of Lewes Priory, Sussex, was deliberately "pulled down for the sake of the materials."

This extraordinary building, almost certainly unmatched in England, was of cruciform shape and unusual size. The longer arm, which pointed north and south, was eighty-one feet three inches long, the cross-arm being a foot shorter. Slightly different dimensions have been given, but those set down here are from a careful measurement of the foundations, made in 1895. Further, the eastern arm of the cross

was placed slightly more towards the north than the western one.

This enormous dovecote is variously stated to have contained from two to four, or even five thousand nest-holes, as to the shape of which there is no information to be had. Over each of the four gables the roof projected in a curious and picturesque manner, giving ample shelter to the perching birds. That such a building should have been deliberately destroyed is a lasting disgrace to Sussex in particular, and to British antiquarianism in general.

Since the disappearance of the Lewes specimen the county has perhaps good reason to consider the example standing at a farm at Berwick, not far distant, as among the best which it can boast. It is a massively built square structure, with angle buttresses, and has suffered to some extent from alterations, besides being a good deal obscured by surrounding buildings. Failing particulars of its former internal arrangements, we are consoled by information as to its utility three centuries ago. This is revealed in *Remembrances for the Parsons of Berwick*, written by Prebendary John Nutt

who commenced these notes about his parish in 1619, and died thirty-four years later. In 1622 he writes:

"The Piggeon house has paied mee tithes and doth this yeere by Nicholas Dobson now farmer thereof; it is rented at £5. a yeere but I take them in kinde and stand to the truthe and conscience of the farmer in the paying of them."

If Prebendary Nutt consumed five pounds' worth of pigeons annually, they must, considering the comparative value of money in those days, have been but rarely absent from his table. Still, there are far worse things than pigeon-pie.

Not far distant from Berwick, in a field at Charleston Farm, is another good dovecote; circular in shape, and built of flints, with a height of fourteen feet, an internal diameter of eighteen, and a tiled roof curiously finished at its apex. The walls are very thick and the door rather small. The potence is in place, as also about three hundred and fifty nests. These, though in several instances repaired with bricks and tiles, are of chalk slabs and blocks.

In the middle of a field at Treyford Manor Farm is a rectangular stone dovecote in good repair, a little over twenty-five feet long, by nearly twenty wide. The ridged roof is of tiles. The walls are little less than three feet thick, while the door, now altered from its former size, was very narrow, with an ogee arch. The height to the eaves is about eighteen feet. More than five hundred L-shaped nest-holes are in place. The Manor Farm itself is dated 1621, and the dovecote may quite well be older by at least a century.

At Trotton, near Midhurst, a square four-gabled seventeenth-century dovecote stands in a garden. The walls, three feet thick, are twenty-five in length, the total height to the gable ridge being thirty-four. The building, which is dated 1626, has a small Tudor doorway, with a window similar in style.

Inside are twelve hundred L-shaped nests; also, at a height of nine and eighteen feet respectively, a six-inch ledge of stone, the under edge of each being chamfered. A local suggestion is that these were the supports for two dividing floors, the building having once contain-

MILCOMBE, OXFORDSHIRE

BASING HOUSE, HAMPSHIRE

Face p. 176.

ed three stories; but there is no trace of beams, and it is more probable that the two ledges were provided, partly as alighting-ledges, partly as a safeguard against rats. In any case they are an unusual feature and add largely to the interest of the whole.

Few Hampshire dovecotes can hope to rival in interest the one specimen that can be mentioned here—that found at Basing House, a place which bulks so large in history. Basing House was, under the care of its owner, the Marquis of Winchester, a stronghold of Royalist faith and endurance through a portion of the Civil War, sustaining sieges during upwards of two years, until at length stormed and destroyed by Cromwell early in October 1645. The importance attached to its fall may be judged by the reward of two hundred pounds awarded to Colonel Hammond, who carried to London the good news of the success; and a certain Mr. Peters dilated in glowing terms to a rejoicing Parliament upon the magnitude of both the place and victory. The surrounding fortifications were over a mile in extent; the Old House had stood for several centuries, a "nest of Idol-

atry"; the New House was furnished "fit to make an emperor's court." One bedroom alone contained furniture to the estimated value of some thirteen hundred pounds. The place was provisioned for years; four hundred quarters of wheat, hundreds of flitches of bacon, beer, "divers cellars-full, and very good"—a point on which Mr. Peters was qualified to judge, having tasted the same.

No less than seventy-four defenders of the stately house were slain, including one woman who had provoked the soldiers by her "railing," and an officer whose height is given as nine feet! The place was plundered, fired, laid in total ruin.

Mr. Peters further speaks of the beef, pork, and oatmeal laid in store; but there was another source of food-supply, of which the gallant garrison no doubt made use—the dovecotes, standing one at either end of a long garden wall. One of the two at least was almost certainly in place when Basing House was stormed three centuries ago, although it hardly dates, as reported locally, from the eleventh century. The second dovecote, a thatched building, is of doubtful age.

The one which doubtless furnished to the

garrison a welcome store of fresh and appetising food is an octangular brick building with sides seven feet in length. The roof, also octagonal, is of old brown flat tiles. In one section of the roof, that immediately above the door, there is a wooden gable with four tiers of entrance-holes, the holes being placed in tiers of one, two, three, and four. The apex of the roof is topped by a stone pillar carrying a knob.

The walls are two feet thick, the door five feet in height. There are five hundred L-shaped nest-holes, with a potence in good order.

Passing now westward into Wiltshire, it is possible that, to readers well grounded in the works of Richard Jefferies, there will occur a curious omission; dovecotes are surely never mentioned in his most delightful books. Yet it is difficult to think of any building that, for its uses and associations, ought to have appealed more strongly to his tastes. Surely among the farms he haunted, the old villages in which he loved to wander and to dream, somewhere a dovecote stood.

One at least stands in the old garden of the now deserted manor-house of Lydiard Millicent, a

village to the west of Swindon, and not difficult of access from Purton station. It is a square brick building, standing at the junction of three fruit-tree-covered walls. Its walls are twenty feet in length, its height about thirty. The roof of old Cotswold stone tiles is very picturesque; four-gabled, with the central cupola crowned by what appears to be the mutilated figure of a pigeon, or at least a bird. There is a "practicable" door on the west side, another, now bricked up, being opposite. Inside are more than one thousand simple oblong nests, together with a potence. The building seems to date from the time of Anne or the early Georges.

A large oblong stone dovecote, with a hipped and stone-tiled roof, stands in another Wiltshire garden, at the house known as Jaggard's, Corsham. Although it measures twenty-six feet long by twenty feet in width it only holds about two hundred nests, some few of which are tenanted to-day. One of the two doors is modern, and the building generally has suffered considerable alteration, the lower part having served as a cowhouse.

A circular stone example, with a stone-tiled

roof and small arched doorway, is in the yard at Wick Farm, Lacock. "Wick" was the pseudonym that Jefferies gave to his old home of Coate; was it this place he had in mind? The building, which may very well date from as early as the fourteenth century, contains about five hundred nests, as well as the remains of a former potence.

One of the most curious and interesting of Wiltshire dovecotes exists at the ancient manor-house of Wilcot, near Pewsey, a place mentioned in Domesday Book, and still exhibiting traces of monastic buildings. The "Monks' Walk" is the name given to a path beside the ponds known as the "Eel Stews"; and close by is what is very possibly the almost equally ancient dovecote, a circular brick building with a cone-shaped roof. Above the low doorway is a small square grated window.

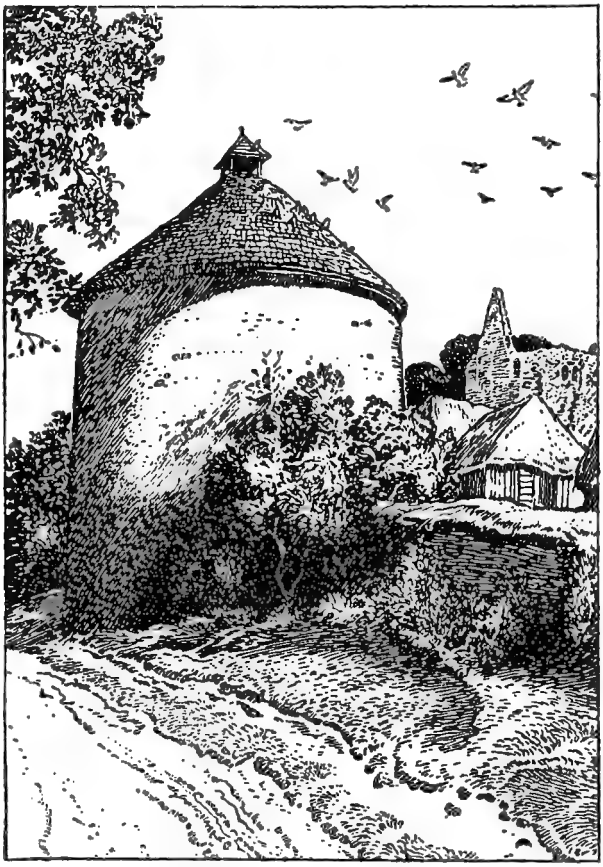
The door gives access to four steps, the dovecote's floor being several feet below the level of the ground outside. We shall shortly see an even more striking example of a dovecote being partly underground. The internal diameter is some twelve feet, the height to eaves about eighteen.

About five hundred L-shaped nest-holes still remain; so, too, does the main beam of the potence, with some portions of its ladder-bearing arms.

A very interesting dovecote enjoys a delightful situation in a corner of the rose-garden at Fyfield Manor, near Pewsey, a house which, dating in the main from Tudor times, has details of still greater age. The dovecote, twenty-five feet square, is built of alternate courses of brick and stone; has a tiled roof, with cupola and weather-vane; a single window; and three hundred and sixty-five L-shaped nest-holes, provided with very narrow alighting-ledges. The walls are four feet thick, the doorway four feet six by two feet three. The upright of the potence still survives.

The number of nest-holes—one for each day of the year—can hardly have been a matter of chance. The same number occurs in some other examples.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN
GLOUCESTER AND OXFORD



MINSTER LOVEL, OXFORDSHIRE

From *Highways and Byways in Oxford and the Cotswolds*

CHAPTER FOURTEEN
GLOUCESTER AND OXFORD

FROM the many fine dovecotes scattered through the length and breadth of Gloucestershire hardly a better introductory example can be chosen than that standing in a meadow near the Manor Farm at Daglingworth, a Cotswold village three miles distant from Cirencester. The nunnery of Godstow had a cell, or as Dame Juliana Berners calls it, a "superfluity," at Daglingworth; and here, as in so many other instances, it is the dovecote only which survives.

It is a large circular building of stone, with a string-course more than half-way up the walls, and a roof in which are two dormer windows. There is no cupola, the weather-vane rising directly from the apex of the roof. Inside are five hundred and fifty nests, with the potence in working order.

Although our business here is with dovecotes, it would, as remarked by Mrs. Micawber in somewhat similar circumstances, be "rash" to leave Daglingworth without pausing at the

church, if only to read the following quaint inscription, quoted by Mr. H. A. Evans in his *Highways and Byways in Oxford and the Cotswolds*; it will be found upon a brass inside the porch, and runs:

THE DISSECTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF
GILES HANDCOX

Who earth bequeathed to earth to Heaven his soule
To friends his love to the poore a five pound dole
To remaine for ever and be imployed
For their best advantage and releefe
In Daglingworth
April the 9. 1638.

Mr. Evans, by the way, deserves mention here as one of the few writers in the *Highways and Byways* series who pays any marked attention to those old buildings which are our chief delight. Mr. Lucas, for instance, passes over the Sussex dovecote at Trotton without giving it a single word.

A very similar dovecote of almost equal external attraction exists at Bibury, near Northleach. Though circular, it carries on its roof a small square lantern mounted on four pillars, the whole seemingly a modern addition; there

is also a dormer window. Unfortunately fuller details of this excellent example of a Cotswold dovecote have proved unobtainable.

At Naunton the dovecote standing in Pigeon House Close at the Manor House is a large square building of good Cotswold stone. The length of each wall is twenty-four feet, and their height to the eaves eighteen. The slated roof is four-gabled, each gable containing a Tudor window two feet six inches square, having a middle mullion of stone. Rising from the centre of the roof is a square two-gabled cupola mounted on four oak supports. There is a string-course about half-way up the walls, and the whole building is of imposing appearance.

The walls are nearly three feet thick, but the doorway is unusually large—seven feet in height by three feet six in width. Inside are over one thousand L-shaped nest-holes, alighting-ledges being attached to five out of the thirty tiers.

Passing into Oxfordshire, though conscious of leaving many a Gloucestershire example undescribed, we may pause at the park of

Chastleton House, in the village of that name near Moreton-in-the-Marsh; for here is a very handsome, although perhaps not very ancient dovecote, of a style not often seen. It consists of an upper story only, raised on massive arches rising from stone pillars—the material of which the house itself is built. The four-gabled roof, with a circular window in each gable, is crowned by an open octagonal lantern. In spite of many endeavours to obtain further particulars of this handsome dovecote, information on the subject is withheld.

Chastleton House was formerly the property of Robert Catesby, a distinguished member of the Guy Fawkes gang. It is said to contain Charles the First's Bible.

Every possible information was readily furnished by the owner of the delightful dovecote at Stanton Harcourt, a building which, attractive in itself, is rendered doubly charming from its situation on the lawn before the Parsonage House. It is a square stone structure covered with rough-cast, roofed with local slates, and lighted by a window in one wall. The walls are two feet nine inches thick, and the door

very small—three feet eleven inches high by two feet wide. Additional interest attaches to this detail of the building by the fact that the original outer door remains, secured by two strong locks; and, further, that there is a second inner door, flush with the inside surface of the wall. This doubling of the doors, a fairly frequent feature of the Scottish dovecotes, is less often seen in English instances.

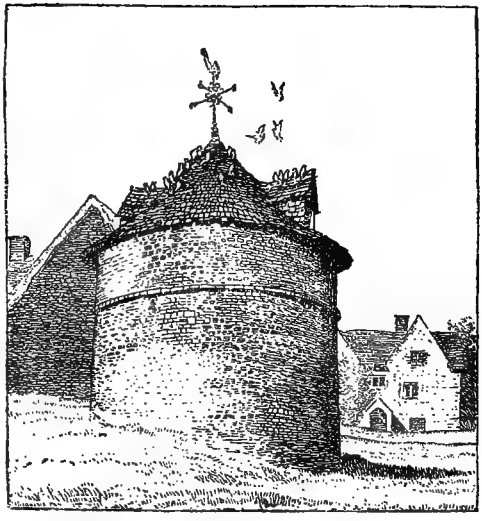
Unsuitable as the shape seems for the introduction of a potence, one was nevertheless present till a few years since, when it was removed, the beam being preserved. Pigeons, too, nested here till recently. More than three hundred nests were built into the walls, while several dozen others were of wood.

Parsonage House is known to have been rebuilt in the reign of Anne, but the dovecote is probably coeval with an older house.

At the Hall, Kiddington, near Woodstock, is a circular stone dovecote, over twenty feet in diameter, having three dormer windows and a lantern in the roof. Several hundred L-shaped nests are still in place, furnished with alighting-ledges. There is also a potence. The

CHASTLETON, OXFORDSHIRE

From *Highways and Byways of Oxford and the Cotswolds*



DAGLINGWORTH, GLOUCESTERSHIRE

From *Highways and Byways in Oxford and the Cotswolds*

CHAPTER FIFTEEN
MONMOUTHSHIRE AND WALES

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MONMOUTHSHIRE AND WALES

MONMOUTHSHIRE is not markedly rich in dovecotes; but, taking it upon our way towards Wales, we pause to look at one or two. The first, if we enter the county from Gloucestershire by way of Chepstow—once a thriving port of entry for the wines of Spain, then for a century a sleepy country town, destined to renewed and vigorous life as an important shipyard during the late war—we find at the mansion of St. Pierre, some six miles west upon the Newport road.

The dovecote is a good square structure, built of stone cemented over, with a tiled roof and several hundred L-shaped nests. It is in good repair and until lately was the home of "tumbler" pigeons, but exhibits little to detain us long.

A little farther on, near the Roman town of Caerwent, we shall find the parish of Llanfair-Discoed, where, at the Court House Farm, is a substantially built square stone dovecote. The roof, which bore a cupola, has fallen in.

The walls, three feet six inches thick, form a cube of twenty-one feet. That on the south side has, besides a door placed several feet above the ground, four external alighting-ledges, each with four entrance-holes. Within are one hundred and fifty oblong nest-holes, also provided with ledges.

There are some remains of an old Norman castle, to which the Court House was built as successor. Over the door of the farmhouse is the warm Welsh greeting freely translatable as

Though narrow be the door, wide is the welcome,

with the date 1653.

Not much is now to be seen of the next dovecote of the county, which lies in its extreme north-west corner, in a narrow slip of country that runs up between the mountainous borders of Herefordshire and Brecon. Here, hidden by hill ramparts upon either side, and lying on the bank of the swift-flowing Honddu river, is Llanthony Priory, where was unearthed by chance in 1905 one of the most curiously constructed dovecotes known.

It was discovered by some workmen who

were digging in a field, and its remains were at once examined by an expert. What he saw was a great part of a building of roughly dressed stone, circular, with a diameter of nearly fifteen feet. The presence of several tiers of L-shaped nest-holes, their inner arms turning right and left respectively in alternate tiers, left no doubt as to the structure's use.

It had quite clearly always stood some seven feet below the surface of the ground. At a little above this height the walls began to arch inwards and were covered by a beehive-shaped roof, formed of flat stones of considerable size, placed horizontally, and overlapping each other. The inner surface of this roof was smoothly plastered with a mortar-like cement, but the outside was rough, and it was the observer's opinion that the columbarium was constructed with a view to the roof and upper portions of the walls being covered with earth—at any rate at certain times.

The broken capstone of the roof was found; circular, four feet four inches in diameter, with a round central hole sixteen inches across. A chased line round the stone, half-way between

the central hole and outer edge, suggested the former presence of some sort of lid.

The walls were four feet thick. The doorway, placed on the south-west, was approached between wing walls, doubtless constructed to prevent the earth from falling in. The nests, provided with alighting-ledges, varied considerably in depth, the builders having been without the guide of an even and well-defined face upon the outer surface of the walls.

It seems extremely difficult to account for the dovecote being so built. A semi-subterranean situation would surely have an effect the reverse of beneficial on the health and comfort of the birds. True that the region was a wild one in the days when it was built; wild even later still, as Walter Savage Landor was to find when he took up his quarters at the Priory inn and set himself to plant the bare hill-slopes with cedars and to build himself a lordly pleasure-house. The dwellers in that lonely district looked askance upon him, high and low alike; pulled up his cedar saplings, quarrelled with him, would not pay their rents or make him justice of the peace. The house

he built is there to-day, an empty shell, the sparrow and the rabbit its sole tenants, to remind us of the disenchanted poet's stay.

But the Llanthony monks had surely other things to lose besides the inmates of their dovecote if they feared attack; it was not for the sake of safety that they built their columbarium partly underground. So, with the problem still unsolved, we pass to Wales.

And here we find, a little unexpectedly, the name of "culver-house," fairly familiar in parts of the south and south-east of England. "Culver" at first sight seems quite possibly akin to the "columba" of the Latins; is it a mere corruption, we may ask? So fancied Grimm, but he was wrong. For "culver" is an Anglo-Saxon word, well known in other forms. The cowslip is the "culverkeys," and you may call a fool a "culverhead."

This short digression is not wholly unconnected with the first of South Wales dovecotes to be noticed here; a semi-artificial, semi-natural one. Half-natural, for it is constructed in a fissure of the cliff close by Port Eynon, on the coast between Worms Head and Mumbles;

half-artificial, for advantage has been taken of the site by man.

The cliff crack has, at some date now unknown, been closed in by a solid wall, sixty feet in height and ten feet thick at the base. This wall is pierced by several windows, while inside there is a rough stone stair. Further, the inner face is lined by many hundred L-shaped nest-holes.

The wild rock pigeon still frequents the coast; the purpose of the unknown builder of the wall is fairly clear—to attract the birds to nest in the holes he had provided, when, covering the windows with a net, he would be able to secure what he required from time to time. This Port Eynon dovecote is most probably unique.

On Caldey Island, at St. Illtyd's Priory, a religious house believed to have been founded in the sixth century, and now again occupied by monks of the order of St. Benedict, there is a rather interesting dovecote over an archway in the west wall of the garth. The buildings still surviving range in age from the eleventh to the sixteenth century, and the pigeon-loft is probably of the fifteenth. It only contains

about thirty plain oblong nest-holes, each furnished with a narrow stone alighting-ledge, and pigeons are still kept.

At Angle Hall, near Pembroke, is a dovecote obviously of great antiquity. It is built of rough stones of very varied size and shape; is circular, with a domed roof, in which there is a central aperture about one foot in width. The height of the walls to the spring of the dome is about twelve feet; there is a string-course at their summit, and another half-way up the dome. The internal diameter is twelve feet.

A modern opening has unfortunately been made for the admittance of cattle, but the arch of the old doorway, which was five feet high by three feet wide, is seen immediately upon the right of this. The nests are not L-shaped, there is no potence, and alighting-ledges are found only here and there. The walls are three feet thick.

But the most curious feature is the presence in the walls of what at first appear to be external nest-holes, dotted here and there. These are not nests, however, but lead through into the building, forming entrances and exits for the

birds. Some are blocked up, but the original number was about four dozen, leading to four of the tiers. The holes take their places in order among the nest-holes proper, and were clearly no afterthought, but so constructed when the dovecote was built.

This very rare arrangement will be found repeated in some Cornish specimens, but seems to be unknown elsewhere. It would certainly lay the building open to attacks by rats and other vermin, and may probably have been abandoned upon that account.

The date of the Angle Hall dovecote has been put at the twelfth or thirteenth century, and, with the exception of the rather large doorway, everything about the building points to its great age. Angle Castle, of which ruins still remain some hundred yards away, was, from 1215, inhabited for nearly two centuries and a half by the De Angulo and Shirburn families. In 1447 Edward de Shirburn dedicated to St. Anthony a little chapel which still stands in the churchyard.

Dovecotes rather similar in plan and general detail to the Angle specimen—always except-

ing the unusual outside holes—are to be seen at the castles of Oxwich and Manorbeer. At a farmhouse called the Vann, beside Caerphilly Castle, is a fine example containing twenty tiers of nest-holes, fifty in a tier.

At Ewenny Priory, near Bridgend, one of the most interesting buildings in Wales, and also one of the least known, we find a dovecote in an unexpected place. The Priory Church offers the rare example of a fortified religious building of pure Norman architecture. In a tower in the line of the former fortifications there may now be seen a pigeon-house, fitted with L-shaped nest-holes, the inner arms of which are unusually short and turn to the right in every case. The room's internal measurements are twenty-five by fifteen feet.

Passing from South Wales to the northern corner of the Principality, we pause before a dovecote in the island of Anglesea—at Penmon Priory. It is a stone building about twenty feet square, but covered with a circular stone roof. The transition from square walls to circular roof is ingeniously effected by the arrangement of the horizontal stones of which the roof

is formed; these being so laid that finally a central aperture is left. Over this is now a cupola, probably a later addition.

A square dovecote offers no great prospect of a potence to be seen inside; and here there is none in the stricter application of the term. But its place is adequately taken by a central stone pillar, fitted to a considerable height with projecting stone steps which gave an easy access to the nests. The building probably dates from about the time of Henry VIII.

In the same district, at Llaneugraid, is a good Elizabethan dovecote, forming the upper story to an open shelter below. It is four-gabled, with a cupola to match; is lighted by diamond-shaped windows, and has a string-course round the walls. Inside there are about one hundred nests.

Before closing this somewhat inadequate description of a few Welsh dovecotes—all that space permits—a word is due to one example long since passed away. Were it in place today it would almost certainly enjoy the distinction of being the only pentagonal specimen in the kingdom.

This building once stood in the courtyard

of Holt Castle, Denbighshire. The fortress was itself five-sided, and the dovecote was no doubt designed to be in keeping with the whole. A ground-plan of the castle, dated 1620, shows a five-sided building marked "Dovecote" in the courtyard, and a note records it as a "decayd doue-house fiue square."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN
DEVON AND CORNWALL

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DEVON AND CORNWALL

CONTRARY to expectation Devonshire, a county otherwise so rich in history, legend, ancient monuments of many kinds, yields but a poor return so far as dovecotes are concerned. It is extremely difficult to understand why Devonshire should have possessed few dovecotes; equally difficult to know why, if they once existed, they should have so largely disappeared. The fact remains, the explanation rests obscure.

Still, that county which, to many persons other than its own inhabitants, will ever be the best loved in all England, is not entirely without examples. At Powderham Castle, near Exeter, the seat of the Earl of Devon, a field contains an ancient dovecote standing near the Exeter to Dawlish road. The field is known as "Pigeon Vale"; but as a human family of Pigeons has for long resided in the parish, it is most probably to them, and not to the old building's former occupants, the name is due. The dovecote is also locally known as the

"Round House." It is a circular brick building of considerable size, and is now converted into a cottage. Needless to say the nests have disappeared, and the structure cannot be regarded as any very great "find" by the dovecote enthusiast.

Away in the north of the county, at Stoke Rivers, near Barnstaple, the rectory garden has a dovecote which, like the hero's helmet, has been converted to "a hive for bees"; the late incumbent, a whole-hearted apiculturist, having made it the headquarters of his hives. It is a small octagonal building of stone, with a thatched roof.

We are better rewarded at Buckland-tout-Saints, a village near Kingsbridge, where, in the garden of the mansion-house, there is a good example of a Devon dovecote, built of stone and "cob." It is circular, with an inside diameter of fifteen feet, a thatched roof and dormer windows. The outer surface of the walls is ivy-covered, and the inside boarded over. The walls are very thick, the doorway noticeably small and low.

The owner has adapted it as a game larder,

a modern purpose for which such a building, little affected by changes of external temperature, is by no means ill-suited. Nor need we look upon the change as being in any way a desecration. Was it not once the rearing-house for future food? It has to-day advanced a stage in that food's history, slightly changed its nature —nothing more. And if, as in this case, the change insures the building being kept in good condition and repair, what could we well desire further.

At Warleigh House, Tamerton Foliot, near Plymouth, is a good circular brick dovecote; the doorway, high and narrow—six feet high by two feet nine inches wide—is of granite. The building has a high-pitched roof of slate, with open cupola upon the top. The walls are nearly three feet thick, and over twenty feet in height. There are nearly five hundred nest-holes, and the former presence of a potence is made clear by the survival of the granite base which took the lower socket of the upright beam. Some portions of the dwelling-house date from the reign of Stephen, and the dovecote is quite probably of little less antiquity.

One of the best of Devonshire dovecotes stands in an orchard of comparatively modern growth at Pridhamsleigh, Ashburton. The building, seemingly of Norman date, is circular and built of stone. The height to the eaves is fifteen feet, and the circumference more than sixty. The domed roof, with a stone coping, has in the centre a circular opening, two feet six inches in diameter. The doorway, five feet high and two feet broad, displays a pointed arch and chamfered edges to the jambs; the walls are three feet thick. Inside there are eleven tiers of oblong nest-holes, about two hundred and fifty in all. Only a few of the upper nests have projecting slates as alighting-ledges. The building is much overgrown with ivy.

Passing now to Cornwall, we find a dovecote at the house of Garlenich, near Grampound. The building, standing just inside the entrance-gate, is dated 1714. It is of brick, octagonal, with a thatched roof, and contains about two hundred nests. The walls are twenty feet in height to the eaves.

Of much greater interest is the very ancient "culvery," the local contraction for "Culver-

hay" (culver = pigeon, hay = a house or homestead) existing at Trevanion, near Wadebridge. It is a circular structure, built of stone and earth, in which no signs of lime or mortar, as we know it, can be traced. The internal diameter is eleven feet, the height of the walls eighteen, and the size of the doorway six feet by three.

The roof, also of stone, is domed after the fashion of the earlier Norman examples. In the centre was originally the circular hole seen in so many dovecotes of this shape and type; but, in this instance, above the hole was a stone, supported on pillars. The pillars have been later removed, and the stone placed flat upon the hole, thus closing it.

This would, apparently, close the building's career as a pigeon-house. But, here, as at Angle Hall in Wales, we find that several holes pierce through the walls, providing entrance for the birds. It is interesting to find that this curious plan, which was clearly never followed as a general rule, should be adopted alike in southern Wales and Cornwall, districts linked in other ways.

Other holes, near the top of the walls inside,

were seemingly designed to support the horizontal beams to which was secured the upper end of the potence, which, the centre of the roof being open, could not be supported at that point.

Another curious feature of this very interesting dovecote is the relatively small number of the nests—one hundred and thirty only—wholly disproportioned to a building of its size. Was there some regulation in the district, limiting the number of birds kept? But if such regulation dated from the period of the dovecote's first erection, why then was it built upon so large a scale?

This dovecote at Trevanion is, although much overgrown with ivy, still in excellent repair, and an object of keen interest to its owner. The same is happily the case at the vicarage, Trevena, where a very similar dovecote is still used for its original purpose. It is a little larger than the one just noticed, has more nest-holes, and is particularly worth seeing as still showing the original arrangement of the opening in the roof; the aperture being covered by a slab supported on three stone pillars.

Yet a third dovecote of this type is found at Crafthole, Whitesand Bay. Here the roof entrance is entirely uncovered. Some other Cornish dovecotes of a similar construction are now more or less in ruins.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN
SOMERSET AND DORSET

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SOMERSET AND DORSET

RECROSSING Devon into Somerset we find ourselves on fruitful ground. Let us turn first to so well known and popular a place as Dunster, where is a dovecote which, besides being of considerable antiquity, is "beautiful for situation," while a tragic story clings to its old walls.

It stands in the garden of the ancient priory; a massive building, circular, and dating from the thirteenth century. The doorway is particularly worthy of notice. The building's height is about nineteen feet, and the diameter the same; the roof is covered with small slates. There are five hundred and forty nest-holes of varying and rather irregular shape. The potence also is in place.

The story above alluded to may best be quoted from the late Prebendary Hancock's *Dunster Church and Priory*. After describing the dovecote he goes on to say:

"A terrible tragedy is on record with regard to this dovecote. It is related that, when, one

spring, it was full of birds, old and young (it would contain quite two thousand) some one shut up or forgot to open the window which gave the pigeons egress to find food for themselves and their young, and that all the occupants were starved to death."

At West Camel, near Bath, in a paddock adjoining the rectory garden, is a circular dovecote with four buttresses. The diameter is fifteen feet, the height considerable. Inside is no sign of the potence which probably once existed, but, though untenanted, more than seven hundred nest-holes still remain, some being L-shaped, others of more simple plan.

The roof is of rough tiles, the walls but little short of three feet thick, and the door noticeably small. Close by is a good specimen of an old tithe barn, perhaps coeval with the dovecote. West Camel was formerly an appendage of Michelney Abbey, near Langport, and the tradition of this having been the abbot's dovecote is quite probably correct.

An even finer tithe barn, with a stately entrance, buttresses, and narrow cruciform window-slits, is the near neighbour of the dovecote

at the Manor House, Pilton. Both house and barn belonged to Glastonbury Abbey. The dovecote, standing in the yard, is a square stone building of no particular beauty, and is now attached to other buildings. The length is eighteen feet, the breadth some two feet less, and height to gable of the tiled roof twenty-five feet. Several hundred nest-holes are still seen within. This dovecote, like the one previously noticed, is buttressed. The suggestion that it is of very early date is confirmed by the good thickness of the walls—three feet four inches. One window faces south, another west. The doorway on the ground level is clearly a modern addition, the original entry having been by a small door placed high in the north wall, and doubtless reached by a ladder.

At Ivythorn Manor, Street, we have an oblong dovecote, measuring thirty and a half feet by twenty-one and a half. There is a gabled roof, the tiles on which have clearly been renewed in modern times. The whole north end has also been rebuilt, a barn-door being inserted, and the former nests removed. The three remaining sides contain nests to the number

of over five hundred. The partitions between them are noticeable as being of a very porous limestone, known as "coral rag" and stated to be French. Ivythorn manor-house dates back for over seven centuries, but the dovecote is of less antiquity.

Another oblong dovecote occurs at Witham, near Bath. It formerly stood in the middle of other farm buildings belonging to Witham Priory, for it is mentioned in an inventory of the early part of the sixteenth century. Its old surroundings have now disappeared, a road runs through their site, and by this road the dovecote stands. Moveover, it has suffered drastic alteration as to purpose, being to-day the Parish Room.

It is a building thirty-one feet long by thirteen feet in breadth, with a height of twenty feet to the high-pitched roof. The roof is newly tiled, but still retains its ancient timber-work. The walls are three feet thick and are supported by four buttresses. The ancient doorway has now disappeared. The still remaining nests are of the orthodox L-shape.

There is an unusual internal feature for which

it is difficult to account with any hope of certainty. This is a ledge or "drip" which runs all round the inside surface of the walls, four feet six inches from the floor. The suggestion has been made that it was meant to carry a wheeled staging to and fro across the house—a means of access to the upper nests. This seems hardly likely, such arrangement being unknown elsewhere.

A certain mystery attaches to the next dovecote on our list. This will be found at Stoke Courcy—commonly called Stogursey—near Bridgwater. It stands on sloping ground east of the church, in the yard of Priory Farm. It is of stone and circular, the walls being three feet thick, the internal diameter about fifteen feet, and the height to the eaves eighteen. The cone-shaped roof is thatched.

A modern floor divides the building into two stories, the upper one being reached by outside stone steps. A window in this upper story faces east, that in the lower looking towards the church.

The accounts received of it are somewhat discrepant. First comes a clear little woodcut,

printed in a magazine some years ago, in which it is described as the "monks' barn"—an obviously erroneous account of a building at once circular and small. Then follows a correspondent who, while not supporting this theory, suggests that it was always what it is to-day; namely a store-house, or, as an alternative, a "game kitchen."

But doubt is seemingly dispelled by the present tenant of the farm, who, in a description of the building which is both minute and clear, states that though many of the original nest-holes are blocked up, some still remain and others can be traced. They had an entrance six or seven inches square, and enlarged inwards.

This seems conclusive, and the Stogursey dovecote is, in consequence, entitled to admission here.

An interesting dovecote stands in the churchyard of Norton-sub-Hamdon. It was a manorial, not a clerical appurtenance, formerly standing in a field, and only assuming its present position when the churchyard was enlarged some years ago.

It is a picturesque circular building of Ham stone, with a cone-shaped roof in which are two dormer windows. The cupola takes the form of a flat stone slab, supported by four small stone pillars and surmounted by an ornamental knob. The internal diameter of the building is thirteen feet, the height to eaves a little more. The level of the floor is some feet lower than the ground outside. Inside are about four hundred oblong nests.

Five buttresses support the walls, which are three feet thick. The doorway is small—four feet six inches high, by two feet four in breadth. On one jamb is carved the date 1785; but the body of the building is certainly the equal in age of the fifteenth-century church. Trask, in his history of the parish, says: "The dovecote, held by Nicholas Newcombe at 6s. 8d. rent, is still with us, although it was built before the church." The rent, unlike the rent of other dwellings at the present time, is falling, for one shilling annually is now paid to the lord of the manor by the churchwardens.

Not far distant, at Stoke-sub-Hamdon, is a dovecote now roofless. It is a circular stone build-

ing, sixteen feet high to the eaves, and fifteen feet in diameter. There is a small square window near the roof, the walls are three feet thick, and the door four feet high. Inside are about five hundred oblong nest-holes, but no trace of a potence. A priory existed here in 1306.

Somerset's dovecotes have detained us long, leaving but little time for those of Dorset, the last English county here to be described. Four only will be noticed; these, though "few," are more than "fit," and eminently worthy of their place.

Most beautiful for situation is the dovecote standing on the lawn at Athelhampton Hall, an ancient manor-house distinguished even in a county which is full of such. The dovecote's background, looking at it from the house, is formed of immemorial elms; while close behind it are green walls of closely clipped yew hedges stretching in a long perspective from the velvet turf.

The dovecote is a large round building, in circumference over eighty feet. The walls are buttressed, and against them several ancient pear trees grow—the most innocuous form of

living vesture that a building can well have. There is a single dormer window just above the eaves of the tiled roof, upon the top of which is a small wooden cupola having three tiers of entrance-holes, alighting-ledges being provided for each tier. The vane surmounting all is a bird which we may take to be a pigeon.

The walls are three feet thick, the door three feet six inches high, by two feet six in width. Inside there is a potence, in good working order, with its ladder still in place. Of about one thousand nest-holes some are simply oblong, while a few have two entrances.

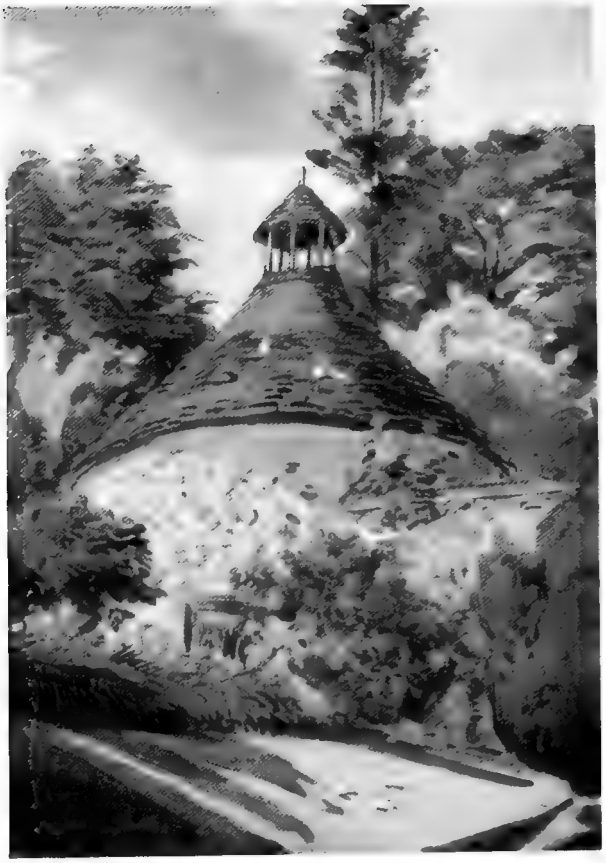
At Melplash Court, near Beaminster, now a farm, there is a circular stone dovecote said to have been built in 1604. It stands in a field and is of rather small size; forty feet only in diameter, and twelve feet high to the eaves. The walls are forty inches thick, the doorway four feet high. The nest-holes, about two hundred in number, are simple oblong recesses; no potence remains, but timbers in the roof suggest one having been in use.

Piddletrenthide Manor presents us with a dovecote differing entirely in one respect from

any of the specimens already seen. It stands about three hundred yards from the house, on a small hill in a wood, and is built of mixed brick and flints. The height to the eaves is considerable, being forty feet; the diameter is twenty-one. While the greater portion of the building is of circular form, the first six feet from the ground is octagonal.

This, at least, is the case externally; but inside, the whole, from floor to roof, is round. It contains over eight hundred L-shaped nest-holes, with alighting-ledges for each tier. The potence and ladder are in complete working order. The walls are three feet thick, the roof tiled, and surmounted by a lead-covered cupola upon which is a weather-vane.

We can recall the story of a feast at which the choicest wine was served the last. Old coachmen, conscious of a tired team before them, were wont so to husband its strength and speed as to "keep a trot for the town." So, on like plan, a certain Dorset dovecote is reserved to be the last recorded in the English section of this book; a dovecote which, did it possess no beauty in itself, would yet claim notice, even affection, on



BINGHAM'S MELCOMBE, DORSET

Face p. 228.

account of its former owner. He, worthy of the county that calls William Barnes its son, spent all too short a portion of his useful life in the old garden where the dovecote stands; spent it among the birds that he loved second only to his fellow-men. It is to Bingham's Melcombe, the last home of Reginald Bosworth Smith, that we are now to turn.

Pity that time and space will not allow description of this wonderful old Dorset manor-house, of this enchanting garden where 'tis always afternoon. Much might be said about the house itself, its architecture dating from the reign of Stephen to the days of Anne; about the gate-house with its buttresses, its old walls nine feet thick; about the hall, the Tudor oriel, with the powdering-room and turret stairs. More still about the garden, with its walls, here built of small grey bricks, and there of "cyclopean stone"; its giant hedge of yew, four centuries old; its bowling-green of an "inviolate antiquity"; its silver firs and sycamores and flowing stream. But of all this it is far better not to speak. Some one has been beforehand with us; one who dwelt for seven happy years amid this scene of placid

beauty, and, when death beckoned, gave his last look to the old garden that he held so dear. For Bosworth Smith himself has told us surely all there is to tell of house and garden in that fascinating volume, *Bird Life and Bird Lore*.

So let us come at once to where, "further on again, is a circular dovecote of stone without an angle in the whole, walls, roof, or top . . . such as no well-conditioned manor-house of the Edwards or the Henrys would willingly have been without." A little cavalier, this treatment of the building, we may think, for it is one of no uncommon charm. And yet we cannot doubt its owner loved it, as he loved its inmates, loved the magpies, ravens, owls of which he wrote with such appreciative pen.

To us at least the building seems one not to be passed lightly by. On entering into ownership of Bingham's Melcombe, the new occupier found the dovecote much dilapidated, and forthwith restored it with a care it well deserved, remodelling the whole upon an old design. It is a circular building of brick and stone. The roof, its slope of most alluring grace, is covered with delightful old stone tiles and crowned by a small

open cupola, poised on pillars many and slender. The walls are three feet thick, the doorway not particularly small. Inside are several hundred L-shaped nests. There is a subtle air of both antiquity and grace about the Bingham's Melcombe dovecote, rendering it unfitted to be anywhere than in its own peculiar place.

Beauty at Bingham's Melcombe—thither have we wandered by a long and devious road from Garway's rugged walls; and here our survey of some English dovecotes ends. Turn now to what awaits us north of Tweed.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN
THE SCOTTISH "DOOCOT"

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"Nor was the court without its ornaments. In one corner was a tun-bellied pigeon-house, of great size and rotundity, resembling in figure and proportion the curious edifice called Arthur's Oven, which would have turned the brains of all the antiquaries in England, had not the worthy proprietor pulled it down for the sake of mending a neighbouring dam-dyke. This dovecot, or *columbarium*, as the owner called it, was no small resource to a Scottish laird of that period, whose scanty rents were eked out by the contributions levied upon the farms by these light foragers, and the conscriptions enacted from the latter for the benefit of the table."

In the above words, familiar to every reader as part of the description of the entrance-court at Tullyveolan, Scott makes us acquainted with a very common form of Scottish "doocot," as well as with the purpose of its erection. Nor, unfortunately, is the fate which befell Arthur's Oven one invariably escaped by dovecotes,

whether they lie north or south of Tweed.

The rectangular variety, equally common, with its single slope of lean-to roof, is also known in fiction. In Mrs. Jacob's story, *The Interloper*, we are introduced to the dovecote of Morphie, and are made spectators of the fight which there took place between the hero and the would-be pigeon-thieves. It is clear that in this case the building was of the rectangular type, with its gables crow-stepped—"corbie-stepped," in Scottish phrase—and ornamented with stone balls upon the summit of the roof. A net is employed by the depredators, who throw it over the entrance-holes in order to secure the birds as they fly out. This was a common method of catching the pigeons in legitimate fashion, and on some Scottish dovecotes iron hooks to which the net was fastened may be seen.

Again, in Neil Munro's novel, *The New Road*, the dovecote of Drimdorran is a central feature in the scene.

The attack upon the dovecote of Morphie was an offence liable to severe punishment; nevertheless it was, without doubt, a frequent

one, judging from the pains taken to render such attempts abortive. As often in England, so also in Scotland the doorways of the dovecote were generally small and low, the doors massive and well secured; we shall indeed frequently find the doors doubled—one on the outside edge, a second on the inside of the thick and solid wall. Not only was the act of dovecote-breaking formerly regarded as a serious crime; it was likewise illegal to kill pigeons found outside the shelter of their home, however far away that home might be. Everything points to the great value placed upon the birds as food—a point of view easily understood when we recall the comparative poverty of Scotland.

But the other side of the question was not entirely neglected, at any rate in later times. The baronial right of dovecote-building, which was the Scottish parallel to the power vested in the lord of an English manor, received a doubtless necessary check early in the seventeenth century. A statute of 1617 limited the right of building and maintaining a dovecote to those persons who held "lands or teinds of a yearly rental amounting to ten chalders of victual";

the chalder being equivalent to sixteen "bolls" of one and a quarter hundredweight each. The dovecote was to be built within two miles of the owner's land—a provision which seems more liberal to him than to the holders of the intervening fields; and only one might be so built for the amount of land named. No limit was placed upon the size of the building or upon the number of its occupants, though on these points a court would perhaps be open to reasonable argument. A dovecote, once built, was not liable to demolition merely because, in changing hands, it had passed into the possession of an owner who had not the stipulated acreage of land; nor, even if condemned by law as having been illegally erected, need it be destroyed entirely, the simple blocking of the entrance-holes being deemed sufficient satisfaction.

It is probable that the statute named was rendered necessary by recent increase in the number of existing dovecotes. More than one example shortly to be seen dates from the closing years of the sixteenth century, and many others are certainly of the same period. Some of those so dated are circular, others oblong;

so that it is a moot point which of these forms was first employed. Remembering the case in England, the palm for antiquity would be awarded to the circular examples, were it not that many of the others show clear signs of a great age. Nor, although the oblong and the circular are the main types, is Scotland lacking in modifications of both. To some few Scottish "doocots" the reader is now, without further delay, to be introduced.

CHAPTER NINETEEN
IN AND AROUND EDINBURGH

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THE Southron who arrives in Scotland by the East Coast route will not lack evidence as he draws near to the "grey city of the North," that he has entered dovecote-land. Clearly seen from the railway carriage is an oblong example between Drem and Longniddry, serving, in conjunction with a circular dovecote in a field immediately west of Prestonpans station, to illustrate the two chief styles. Both of these dovecotes will be noticed later on; meanwhile let us see what Edinburgh and her suburbs have to show.

And here the visitor, however poor be his pedestrian powers, is at little pains to carry out his search. Let him board a tram-car going south from the Register House, and travel on it to the terminus at Nether Liberton. There, barely fifty yards away, between the forking roads, he sees a high bare wall; viewed from the southern side the dovecote stands revealed.

It is a very large and massive building, a most excellent example of its kind. The shape

is oblong, with a lean-to roof which, as often the case in this type, is broken half-way down into two separate planes, forming an upper and a lower slope; the slope of course is almost always towards the south as here; and entrance-holes for the birds are provided under the eaves of the upper slope, in addition to a row at the top of the south wall. It is a pity that, while the upper section of the roof is tiled, the lower half has been renewed with slates.

The building is divided into two equal and entirely identical compartments, each entered by a massive door placed on the outer edge of rough stone walls full three feet thick. The door is secured, not only by a lock, but by heavy iron bars, which, fitting over staples, are held fast in their position by an upright bar. Further, on the wall's inner edge there is a second door. Clearly the Scottish doocot was regarded as a treasure to be held secure.

The nests inside are plain rectangular recesses, those of L-shaped form being practically unknown north of Tweed. There are about three hundred in the higher or north wall of each compartment, rather fewer on the south wall

and upon the sloping walls that form the sides; the two compartments hold, together, some two thousand nests. The party-wall appears above the roof.

This dovecote, probably but little short of some four centuries in age, belongs to The Inch, a neighbouring mansion said to contain the oldest inhabited room in Scotland—an ancient dining-room with bare stone walls.

Here perhaps may be discussed a question which has not improbably arisen in the reader's mind. What is the object of dividing the dovecote of this form into two compartments, an arrangement as common in Scotland as it is rare in England?

The solution is probably that given by the present holder of a dovecote of this type. He points out that, as may be easily imagined, the taking of a large number of squabs from the nests causes a certain discontent and restlessness among the parent birds; so much so that they will sometimes desert the house for a short time. If the dovecote be in two compartments, having no internal communication, they can be "raided" alternately, one thus being always un-

disturbed.

If this explanation be accepted it carries with it the conclusion that the Scots were more advanced in the theory and practice of successful pigeon-rearing than their English neighbours, and indeed than their French friends. Yet it is strange that the religious orders of both France and England, skilful dovecote-builders as they were, should seemingly have missed this point.

There is indeed an alternative theory, which, much as it might have suited Dr. Johnson, is not one to hazard lightly, much less to accept. Still, is it possible that, Scotland possessing more thieves than England, care was taken that at least all the eggs should not be placed in one basket; that dovecote-breakers should be faced by two good sets of doors, and not one only, if they wished to "sweep the board"?

From Liberton it is a short and pleasant stroll to the beautifully placed ruin of Craigmillar Castle, where, however, the small nest-lined tower in the outer courtyard wall is of no very striking interest. The nests have doubt-

less been in place for many years; but it is questionable if it was for pigeons, rather than as a look-out station or advanced-post, that the tower was designed.

For those who care to see, not a true dovecote, but an ancient tower which has been adapted to that use, the walk may be continued down the Dalkeith Road until the little town is nearly reached. Upon our left, at Sheriffhall, among a group of pleasant houses, is a high square tower which has certainly formed part of other buildings.

It has been fitted as a dovecote, being lined from floor to roof with wooden nests. Further, not only is the woodwork ingeniously arranged in octagonal form, but a potence, still in excellent condition, will be found. Unlike the more orthodox pattern, however, it carries its ladder in an absolutely perpendicular position, not upon a slope.

This dovecote is quite populous. Asked whose the pigeons are that make their exit with no little tumult as we open the old rusted iron door, the lady of the house at which the key is kept replies that she would fancy they

must be "the Duke's." They are not hers—of that she is quite sure. Nobody feeds them, no one seems to own them; nor do they prey upon the gardens close around. Dalkeith is in a highly cultivated district, and we feel that here again is room for doubt respecting any harm that a few score of birds may cause.

For those who can spare time to wander farther south to classic Hawthornden, birthplace and home of Drummond the poet, there is a very curious dovecote to be seen. A doorway in the cliff upon which stand the remnants of the former house, gives access to a passage leading to a group of chambers hewn out of the solid rock. In one of these we find the well which once supplied the house; while in a second, through whose broad low window we look out upon the lovely glen and hear the rush of the swift Esk, there are six tiers of rather shallow recesses, thirty in a tier, all quite obviously pigeon-holes. The chamber goes by the name of "Bruce's library," and many a less delightful place for study might be found; although what Bruce was doing at Hawthornden, and how extensive was his travelling library, are questions

it is hard to solve.

Ignoring this proposed digression to Dalkeith and Hawthornden, the visitor may, from the Nether Liberton dovecote, take the hill to the Upper village; noting on his way, it is to be hoped, the experimental stone causeway on the left side of the road, which, while it gives a smooth and easy surface for the wheels of an ascending cart, provides security of grip for horses' feet. It was suggested and laid down by Robert Stevenson, grandfather of Robert Louis, a century and more ago.

From the hill-top a road upon the right will lead us to the Braids and Morningside. A short half-mile along it is a dovecote on the left; one similar in style to that just seen, but covered with rough-cast, and having a well-groomed and somewhat modern air.

Beyond it, on our right, is Liberton Tower; not a dovecote, but an ancient "peel," though pigeons have been quartered in its upper story now and then. Still farther, where the Braid Burn flows in a deep glen between the Braid and Blackford Hills, there is another dovecote, snugly hidden from sight. Indeed the house

at which it stands—the Hermitage of Braid—is hardly seen, so deep the glen, so dense the screen of intervening trees. The house is full of history, even though the present one is but a century old; its predecessor stood a little higher, on the glen's north bank. But Skelton, Mary Queen of Scots' defender and apologist, lived in the present house, and Froude has sat and talked within the walls that Adam planned.

The dovecote stands in the large sloping kitchen-garden, rare rock-plants from Salonika flowering at its doors. It is of oblong plan, with two compartments; but, built at a later period, when desire for ornament had grown, is pleasingly ornate in style. The coping of the high north wall slopes slightly downward from the middle to each end, and bears three decorative urns, another being at the south end of either gable-wall. The comparatively moderate age of the building is further proved by the small thickness of the walls—two feet.

Returning towards the city, we might perhaps enquire for East Morningside House, a dwelling dating from a time before the present suburb had surrounded the large garden in the

midst of which it stands. Here is a dovecote, tall and square; the lower part now used as a hen-house, and the whole so draped with ivy that it is almost impossible to ascertain the shape of roof. But still some fragment of its ancient purpose clings about the place; from time to time a pair of pigeons settle in it for a season, rear a brood, and presently depart.

If we now take a west-going car we shall reach Murrayfield. Thence it is little more than a full mile to where, beyond the gates of that Zoological Park which is the pride of Edinburgh, lies the village of Corstorphine, with its quaint squat-towered, stone-roofed church. Some fifty yards beyond it, in a garden which was once a field, stands an exceptionally fine example of the other type of Scottish dovecote, circular in plan.

It is a large building, over eighty feet in circumference, and holding quite a thousand nests. The walls are about three feet thick, the domed roof has a central opening, and the occupants were offered a second means of entrance by a curious little window-shaped group of holes placed above the midmost string-course

of the three around the house. Above each of the two lower string-courses the walls receive a slight "set-back"; the third is just below the roof.

This is an exceptionally handsome dovecote, and we love it none the less that from its ancient walls the voice of pigeons falls upon our ear to-day. Quite out of keeping with its peaceful purpose is the knowledge that, close to the building, now the sole remnant of the former castle of Corstorphine, jealousy provoked a certain George, Lord Forrester, to kill his wife.

From the Murrayfield tramway terminus it is but a short walk to Ravelston, where, in a garden unrivalled in Edinburgh, among vast yew hedges, spreading cedars, dolphin fountains, relics of antiquity of every kind, we find the last of Edinburgh dovecotes there is time to see. It is of oblong, two-compartment type, and very large; quite twenty-five feet high, and long and broad in proportion. The walls are three feet six inches thick. The one compartment is still open, though no longer occupied by birds; the doorway of the second has for years been closed by a thick growth of ivy.

Inside we notice that the vaulting of the roof is of remarkably fine workmanship, and very well preserved; the small round central aperture is perfect as when made. A tiny dormer in each section of the roof contains a pair of entrance-holes. The higher wall is ornamented by stone balls on upright shafts.

The scene at Ravelston is altogether so delightful that it is to be regretted that this splendid dovecote, so well fitted for a "garden ornament," should be unfortunately placed; the front in close proximity to a thick hedge, which makes a full appreciation of the building quite impossible.

CHAPTER TWENTY
HADDINGTONSHIRE

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For those who would see something of the dovecotes to be found outside the capital, yet lack the time to journey far afield, no better plan can well be recommended than a little tour in Haddington, a county where an ample harvest may be gleaned. With this in view we leave the train at Prestonpans.

First comes the circular example close to Northfield House, a delightful building of the early seventeenth century, the date upon the lintel of the door being 1611, to which is added the motto, "Unless the Lord build, in vain builds man." In truth the house, with gables, overhanging turrets, and quaint corners upon every side, is more attractive than the dovecote, which presents no very special charm. It is a large, substantial, circular building of stone, with three string-courses and a vaulted roof.

On turning to the right a few yards down the road, we come to Preston Tower. Its gaunt ruin stands in a market-garden in the north-east corner of which is a dovecote worth a pause. It is of oblong form, with lean-to roof and one

compartment only; the higher wall adorned by three stone pillars capped with balls. The gable-walls are crow-stepped; pains were evidently taken with the appearance of the whole.

Now down the hill until we reach the winding tramway running between Musselburgh and Port Seton. Here, in a brewer's yard upon the very margin of the Firth of Forth, are two more dovecotes; tall, not specially attractive buildings, one of which at least is sliding down the easy road to ruin. They are of interest from the fact that they stand close together—barely fifteen yards apart; a situation possibly accounted for by the fact that two different abbeys —Holyrood and Newbattle—formerly held lands in the district.

Returning to the station, Tranent church is visible upon the hillside, lying a mile away to the south-east. As we approach it we shall see the dovecote just below the churchyard wall. This *is* of special interest, being one of the oldest dated examples in Scotland; 1587 is the date upon the lintel, where we also make out the name "David Sitoun." There are the traces of another name upon a stone a little higher up,

which has all the appearance of being a fragment of gravestone.

The dovecote is of stone and oblong, with but a single chamber. The door has been walled up, and entrance is impossible. An ugly gaping crack beside it tells of the damage wrought by subsidence, coal-pits being now on every side, and one of the largest coal-washing plants in the kingdom a prominent feature of the foreground.

It is a rather long and uninteresting road which runs east from Tranent, changing from one side to the other of the railway line by level crossings, and leading through the village of Longniddry, with its Veterans' dwellings just a shade too studied in their effort to be picturesque. At a large homestead half-a-mile beyond Longniddry station we find cottages much pleasanter to look upon than those too often seen on Lothian farms; and a large dovecote occupies a chamber over the main entrance to the yard.

We are rewarded further when we come to Redhouse, the tall ruin beside the line. The dovecote here is one of the familar oblong type,

but has some special features of its own. The pigeons were accommodated on an upper floor; the lower story, with a very massive vaulted roof, is now used as a hen-house, but was probably intended for a store.

The upper story is of two compartments, each originally furnished with a separate door placed eight feet from the ground. One of these doors has been blocked up, an internal communication being made between the compartments. Each is still lined with oblong nests, and each has in its vaulted roof an aperture. This is a very rare example of an upper story dovecote being in two divisions. The building was constructed with unusual strength and obvious care, the vaulting of both floors being specially worthy of notice.

From Drem station an undulating walk of some three miles will bring us to the village of Athelstaneford. On looking up the slope that faces us as we descend the hill we see a dovecote on the right.

It stands below the churchyard wall; a building about sixteen feet square, and seven feet six inches high to the lower of its two string-

courses. Its material is rubble stone of all shapes and sizes, an opportunity for examination being only too well afforded by the fact that the north wall now lies in ruin upon the ground, leaving the nests inside intact. This disaster occurred during the winter of 1919–1920, and it is to be feared that unless steps are promptly taken to repair the damage, the whole house will presently be down. A villager bemoans the coming loss, but adds that "with so many war memorials folk hae little coin to spare."

The walls are over three feet thick, the door no more than two feet six in breadth. Over the latter is a stone which carries the date 1583, enclosed in an oblong knotted design. Here, then, we have another dovecote of well-proved and definite antiquity. The gable-walls are corbie-stepped, and the roof is in two planes, with entrance-holes below the eaves.

Inside there are about a thousand nests. As in some other square Scottish dovecotes there is a potence—or a rather poor attempt at one. The central post revolves, but carries a rough framing, with no sign of a true ladder.

Descending the hill at right angles to our line

of approach, taking a turn to the left and another to the right, we are soon at Gilmerton House, or rather at the steading, screened from the road by a small plantation. In the middle of this is a fine circular dovecote of brick, which the grieve is far from unwilling to exhibit on request.

More modern than the one just visited, it is in some ways more pleasing; for, far from being deserted and in semi-ruin, it is well populated and in excellent repair. As the door opens to the turning of the key, pigeons swarm out through the small cupola that tops the dome-shaped roof; through the three curious little windows immediately above the upper of two string-courses; even through the door itself, so urgent seems their haste.

The building, fifty feet in circumference, contains about eleven hundred nests, with a potence in good working order. The storms and frosts of winter have worked havoc here; the coat of plaster recently applied has parted from the walls in places and hangs loose. But there is here no danger of the dovecote's most-feared foes—indifference and neglect. We notice

DRYLAW, EAST LINTON

the effective ornament attained by the bricks immediately below the string-courses being laid obliquely, with a corner of each projecting.

A winding unfrequented by-way leads us up a hill and into the main road between Dunbar and Haddington. Following it eastward, we shall reach the pleasant little town, or rather the large village, of East Linton, with its bridge across the Tyne.

Here, time permitting, we may turn aside from our main route and pay a visit to two dovecotes which stand not far off. One, seen from the north end of the village street, is on the slope of Drylaw Hill. It is a large and substantial stone building of three stages, with a conical roof, built on an outcrop of rock in a field. There is a low broad dormer window in the roof, and further access for the birds by a row of holes immediately below. A description of the interior is not possible, the key being kept some distance away.

A second interesting dovecote will be found at Preston Mains, a farm about a mile along the road to Tyninghame. It is a very large square structure, flanked on either side by

lower buildings. Unfortunately these have been converted into cottages, and a chimney now defaces either corner of the dovecote's higher side. But, even with this unwelcome addition, the building is imposing. The slope of the tiled roof is on two levels, with the entrance-holes, as usual in such cases, at the "break."

Resuming the main road we cross the river and reach Phantassie, a large farm upon the left, a short half mile beyond the bridge. At the bottom of a lane leading to fields lying north-east of the steading is a very curious dovecote.

The background is well worth a glance before we give attention to the pigeon-house itself. Beyond the fields that lie before us is the winding river, and upon its farther bank is Prestonkirk, snugly ensconced below a ridge of hill. That hill-slope is a curious sight to eyes accustomed rather to the verdant pastures of the English Midlands or Welsh Borders than to Lothian lands. Field after field, without a break of intervening green, is red in spring with the bare soil of Britain's finest land; golden in early autumn with the ripening grain. The eye may

1. SPOTT 2. PHANTASSIE
3. LUFFNESS HOUSE 4. GILMERTON HOUSE
HADDINGTONSHIRE

Face p. 264.

weary at so long a stretch of cultivation, but the heart rejoices at the thought of such a grain-producing land.

Now to the very curious dovecote standing here. It is of stone and circular—nothing uncommon about either point, considering where we are. But circular dovecotes are most often covered by a circular domed roof. Not so the one before us. Its builder clearly knew the benefit of giving to its occupants a sheltered southern slope, and this is how he set himself to carry out the plan.

The height of the round wall is varied, highest towards the north and lowest to the south. The roof is therefore sloping, slightly horseshoe-shaped, and is a foot or more below the summit of the walls, thus affording additional protection from cold winds. Entrance is given by a curious low broad dormer window, also by a row of holes below the eaves, which give a happy effect of miniature arcading.

It is difficult to set aside the opinion that the designer of this dovecote was a Scotsman who had been in Southern France, or who had perhaps received advice upon the matter from a

French visitor or friend; so strikingly does the unusual style of roof remind us of those raised against the mistral's blasts. The lean-to, southward-facing roof so often seen upon an oblong Scottish dovecote, but so rare in England, gave a welcome shelter in a land where chill winds blow; but here we have one which combines the shelter of the lean-to roof with the main building's rounded form.

The dovecote is a large one, the circumference being sixty feet; massive in structure, for the walls are four feet thick. The doorway measures five feet high by two feet broad. Inside are about five hundred nest-holes; also a not uninteresting substitute for the usual potence, perhaps deemed too difficult of nice adjustment in a house which narrows markedly as the walls ascend. There is a fixed post rising to the roof. Against it is secured a ladder giving access to a large proportion of the nests. Those at a still higher level are reached from a shorter ladder fixed in the reverse direction from that taken by the one below. In short, the dovecote at Phantassie is one well worth seeing.

Following the main road for two miles or

more, the railway ever on our right, we take, directed by a finger-post, a lane which leads us towards the Lammermoors and Spott. Spott is a place with interests of more kinds than one. From Doon Hill, just above it, David Leslie once descended, on a wild September morning, to take part in Dunbar Drove. Witches were burnt at Spott in 1705; and at this village, on a Sunday just three centuries and a half ago, the Reverend John Kello, parson of the place, strangled his wife with a towel, hanged her on the chamber wall in order to suggest the death being due to suicide, and then, leaving the manse and entering the church, preached calmly to his waiting flock.

The dovecote, easily discovered, is a well-kept, typical example; oblong and of two compartments. The doorways seem modern enlargements, but the ornamental pillars standing on the higher wall are probably original.

A short walk takes us to Dunbar, and if the time is summer and the weather hot it is most likely that an inn and tea will be the visitor's first thought, for we have covered many miles to-day. But, nature sufficiently refreshed, there

is a dovecote close at hand that should not be passed by. Leaving the High Street, let us take the turning marked as Edinburgh Road; keep a look-out upon the left, or ask to be directed to the Friar's Croft, a piece of land which once belonged to the old abbey of the place. Here, rudely shouldered by a telegraph post, is a large dovecote which is surely the ugliest in Scotland!

Ugly indeed, but curious; for it is an oblong building, not, as usual, with a lean-to roof, but one which slopes both north and south. Moreover, the ridge runs across, and not in the direction of, the length. The slopes originally met at a gable-ridge, still clearly to be seen. But at some unknown period an extraordinary addition has been made. The ridge was "capped" by an immense square-topped inverted wedge of masonry. It was doubtless to support this formidable addition of weight that there were introduced within two massive arches, crossing from side to side, and built of a greyer stone than that of the main body of the house. The lower ends of each arch take the form of a well-finished roll.

The nests are to a large extent filled in. An ordinary ladder gives access to most of them; but, high in the gable-ridge and in the addition already described, there is a small potence, carried by a beam which runs across the house.

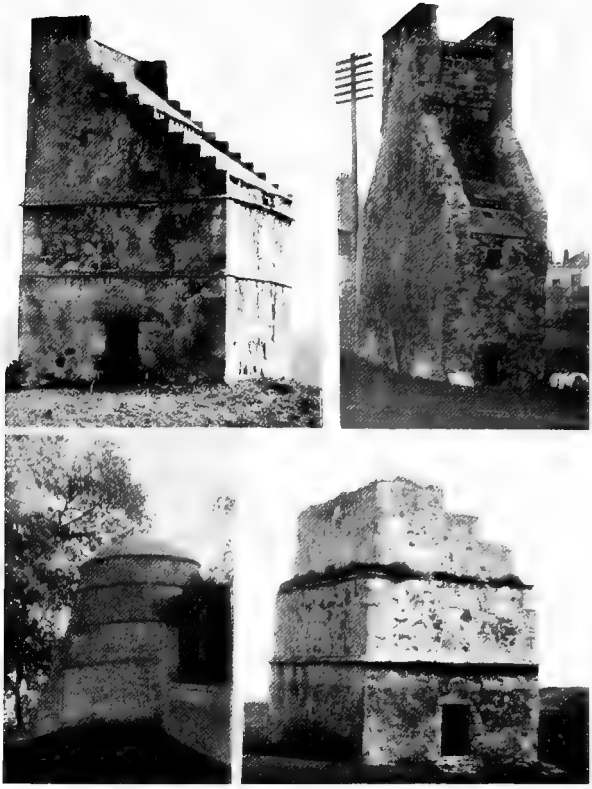
It is difficult to suggest an explanation of the curious addition to this dovecote. It adds very little to the accommodation; it is exceedingly clumsy and top-heavy in appearance; and, as seen by the introduction of arches, it called for drastic measures for its safe support. There, however, it is, defying conjecture, silently hiding its strange origin.

If, in returning from Dunbar to Edinburgh, we keep as far as possible beside the intervening stretch of iron coast, we shall soon come upon a dovecote which is probably well known to many a visitor—that at Tantallon's still imposing although ruined hold. Here, opposite the castle's entrance, in a field still guarded by a ditch and mound, we find a fine old dovecote of the oblong shape; placed but a stone's-throw from the edge of the sheer cliff on which Tantallon stands, above the shore on which the North Sea thunders without pause.

Simple and homely, the Tantallon dovecote has a beauty of its own; for its old roof is grass-grown, and upon its crumbling string-course blooms the gorse. It is of two compartments, one still showing all its nests intact, while in the other only those which lined one wall remain. Each chamber has an oblong opening in the roof. The building is some five and twenty feet in length by seventeen feet broad. A rather unusual feature is that the two doors are not, as usual, side by side, that of one chamber being at the end.

There is a good dovecote of similar form in the neighbouring town of North Berwick, near the station; another in a field below the Law; but neither need detain us long. Passing west, we come, after a walk of two miles, to Dirleton, a really picturesque Scottish village, where the old gardens of the castle, with a splendid holly hedge as one of their attractions, should be seen. The dovecote built into the castle's garden wall is best viewed from the village green.

It is a good example, circular, and buttressed to a point some half-way up. There are three



1. ATHELSTANEFORD
2. DUNBAR
3. DIRLETON CASTLE
4. TANTALLON CASTLE
HADDINGTONSHIRE

Face p. 270.

string-courses, and a domed roof with central circular entrance. Within are nearly nine hundred nests, but no traces of a potence.

A continuation of the walk will bring us to that heaven of the golfer, Gullane, and, pursuing the road across the links, we come in time to Aberlady, half a mile short of which is Luffness House. Here, just within the entrance-gate and forming a delightful ornament to a close-shaven sloping lawn, is a very similar dovecote to the Dirleton specimen. It is perhaps slightly less massive in build, has only two string-courses, and a flattish domed roof crowned by a small lantern which is obviously a later addition. Inside are five hundred and fifty nests, with a potence slightly the worse for age.

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE
ELSEWHERE IN SCOTLAND

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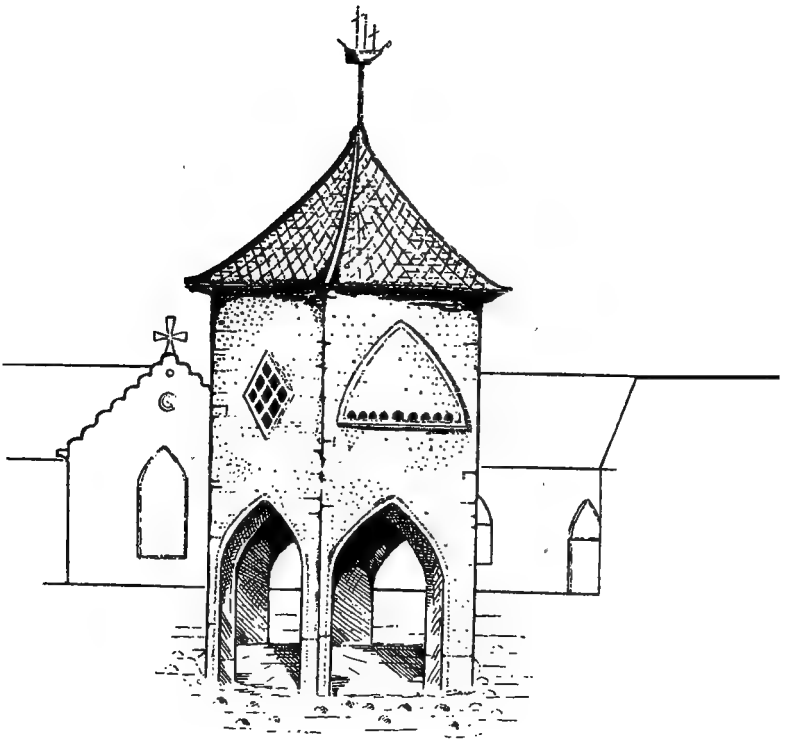


MEGGINCH CASTLE, PERTHSHIRE

CHAPTER TWENTY ONE
ELSEWHERE IN SCOTLAND

GATHERING into our concluding chapter a miscellaneous collection of dovecotes from various districts of Scotland, we will begin in the extreme north by a visit to the island of Stroma, lying off the north-east corner of Caithness. Here will be found two examples of interest.

The first is an old bell-shaped dovecote of two stages, standing near to Freswick House. It is about twenty feet in height, has a circular opening in the roof, and contains stone-built nests which begin at a height of seven feet from the floor. This, by the way, is in accord with the advice of Waterton, who tells his readers that the walls should be solid to a height of six feet from the ground as a security against the "Hanoverian rat."

The second Stroma example is both interesting and unusual; a now roofless building in the middle of a graveyard on the south shore of the island. It is rectangular, constructed of grey

flags, with sandstone quoins. The walls, some thirty inches thick, are twenty-five feet long by eighteen feet six inches broad, and twenty-two feet high. There is a doorway with a bead-and-hollow moulding in the western wall, and another at a higher level on the opposite side. On a stone in the south wall the date "1677" is carved in relief.

The building is two-storied. The lower chamber is vaulted, the vaulting rising from a six-inch ledge two feet above the level of the floor. This was quite clearly a burial-vault; while in the chamber above are stone nest-holes for pigeons. This curious combination is quite possibly unique.

At Stenster House, near Bower, is a somewhat dilapidated dovecote, seventeen feet three inches square, with a span roof and crow-stepped gable-walls. The walls, three feet thick, are twenty-six feet high to the roof ridge; the nests of stone.

Other Caithness examples include a beehive-shaped building in the garden of Dale House, near Halkirk, with three string-courses, a height of seventeen feet, and a diameter of sixteen; and

STROMA ISLAND, CAITHNESS

FORSE HOUSE CAITHNESS

Face p. 276.

a pair of eighteenth century dovecotes at Ackergill Tower, Wick, oblong, with lean-to roofs. Calling for more detailed notice is the interesting oblong dovecote of two compartments in the "policy" of Forse House, Latheron. It is twenty-eight feet long by sixteen broad, the main wall being twenty-five feet high. The lean-to roof is broken into two planes half-way down, two sets of entrance-holes being placed beneath the upper slope. The crow-stepped gable-walls have balls as ornaments, while in the middle of the higher wall is a thistle. Finally, the arrangement of the string-courses is somewhat unusual, there being three on the main wall, two upon the sides, and one in front.

Now coming south as far as Forfarshire, an unusual dovecote awaits us in the policies of Pitmuies, a mansion near Guthrie. Is it perhaps needful to inform the English reader that the Scottish "policy," or "policies," is what the southron calls a park? By a "grass park" the Scotsman means a piece of meadow-land.

The Pitmuies dovecote stands among trees beside the Vinny burn. The form of the main building differs from many other Scottish ex-

amples only in being square instead of oblong, the inside measurement of each wall being twelve feet. The lean-to roof is of interest, being covered with large shield-shaped slabs of stone. The dovecote is of stone, the high back wall being rough-cast; this wall is fourteen feet in height, the front one six feet less. The thickness is two feet. The two side walls are corbie-stepped, and round the back and sides is a ledge or string-course four inches broad. On the back wall appears a shield with coat-of-arms, the latter so defaced that the owner of Pitmuies has so far been unable to decipher it. But the date —1643—is clear.

The house is entered through the south wall by a doorway with a pointed arch. Above this doorway, just below the eaves, there is a row of fifteen entrance-holes, divided from each other by stone slabs. Inside are about five hundred nest-holes.

The most curious feature is the presence at each end of the front wall of a small circular tower, with a battlemented top rising slightly above the lower edge of the roof. Externally the towers are identical in form, each being lighted

by a small glazed cruciform window. But while the western tower is entered by a small door from inside the main building and is lined with nests, the other is only accessible by an external door, has no communication with the dovecote, and contains no nests.

That the designer should construct two towers for the sake of symmetry is easy to be understood; less obvious is his reason for connecting one with the main building and inserting nests, while leaving the other empty and cut off. This dovecote thus presents us with another of those problems met with in our pilgrimage.

In Perthshire a single example must suffice us—one which atones for youth by its unusual shape. It is the first sexagonal dovecote seen since leaving the Herefordshire mansion of Foxley, and dates from the eighteenth century. It stands in the courtyard of Megginch Castle, near Errol, a seat of the Drummond family. The building is an upper story only, raised on six pointed arches which enclose an open space. The wide-eaved slated roof is of an ogee curve, culminating in a point, above which is a ship as weather-vane. The entrance for the birds is by a

row of holes, placed at the bottom of a "dummy" window with a pointed top.

Pigeons are still the tenants of this most attractive cote. About fifty pairs occupy it in the breeding-season, reinforced by new-comers towards autumn, when, as the owner tells us, wild pigeons seem glad to take refuge from the attacks of the numerous peregrine falcons then on passage.

Coming to Fifeshire, we find a county still rich in dovecotes, though many have disappeared since the close of the eighteenth century, when the number existing is stated to have been three hundred and sixty. There was a local saying that the usual possessions of a Fifeshire laird comprised "a puckle land, a lump o' debt, a doocot, and a law plea"—no very rich inheritance. Two of those still remaining shall be noticed here as being readily accessible.

The first is in the immediate vicinity of Rosyth Castle, an old tower which, formerly standing on a strip of land which was an island at high water, has now been absorbed into the vast enclosure of the new naval dockyard, and looks forlorn enough, surrounded as it is by gas-

1. PITTENCRIEFF GLEN, FIFESHIRE
2. DOUGALSTON, MILNGAVIE, DUMBARTONSHIRE
3. ROSYTH CASTLE, FIFESHIRE
4. CORSTORPHINE, EDINBURGH

Face p. 280.

containers, giant cranes, and miles of granite quays. But happily the dovecote stands on the mainland in a little wood which slopes down to the shore; and the visitor can examine and even photograph the building without risking liberty or life.

It is an exceedingly interesting specimen, rectangular in form, and covered with a ridge roof formed of large stone slabs. The gables are corbie-stepped, and—a very unusual feature—each "step" is itself gabled, forming what architects call a "gablet."

Over the door is a very curious ornament, resembling a wide-spreading pair of buffalo horns, but with the addition of a loop in each such as is seen in those of rams. The spread is far too great for them to be intended for the horns of sheep; unless, indeed, the mason-artist drew on his imagination, or upon his patriotic pride.

Our second dovecote stands at the top of Pittencrieff Glen, Dunfermline, the public park presented to the town by the late Andrew Carnegie. It is a large circular building with a projecting cornice, above which the walls are battlemented. There is a cupola upon the roof. Over

the pointed doorway is a window-slit in the form of a Greek cross, on each side of which is a quatrefoil opening, now blocked up with stone—if, indeed, they were ever open. Inside the nests are made of wood; this fact, in spite of the quite usual style of roof and cupola, make it permissible to doubt whether the tower was not originally intended for an outlook rather than a pigeon-house.

In Stirlingshire we will pass over a good circular dovecote at Dunipace, near Denny, in favour of something still better to be found at South Bantaskine, a house on a hill-side two miles from Falkirk. The house itself is not a century old; and the adjoining quarry whence its stone was taken has been turned into a most charming water- and rock-garden, where a small stone Cupid smiles upon the scene. But it is on the lawn beside the house that we shall find the dovecote, which was spared from demolition when the former mansion was pulled down.

It is an upper story only, placed upon the arch that formed the entrance to the former stables, and is octagonal, with a fine ogee roof. In each of its eight walls there is a pointed window;

"dummy" ones on every side except the south, where holes give entrance to the birds. On this side there is also a small dormer in the roof. The interior, lined with oblong nests, is reached from the archway by means of a trap-door in the floor.

Standing on shaven turf and backed by a wide-spreading cedar, with clumps of rhododendrons and azaleas in full boom, this South Bantaskine dovecote would be hard to match. And the last needed touch is given by the snowy fantail pigeons that for ever flutter round the roof and windows, light the shadowy archway with their graceful forms, or make a dazzling contrast with the emerald of the sunny lawn.

Two Dumbartonshire dovecotes deserve inspection. One occupies the middle of a field at Dougalston, Milngavie. The shape is sexagonal, the walls of stone, although the nests are brick. The total wall-length is sixty-six feet; the height to the eaves, where there is a good corbel-table, twenty feet, and the thickness two feet. There is a cupola upon the slated roof.

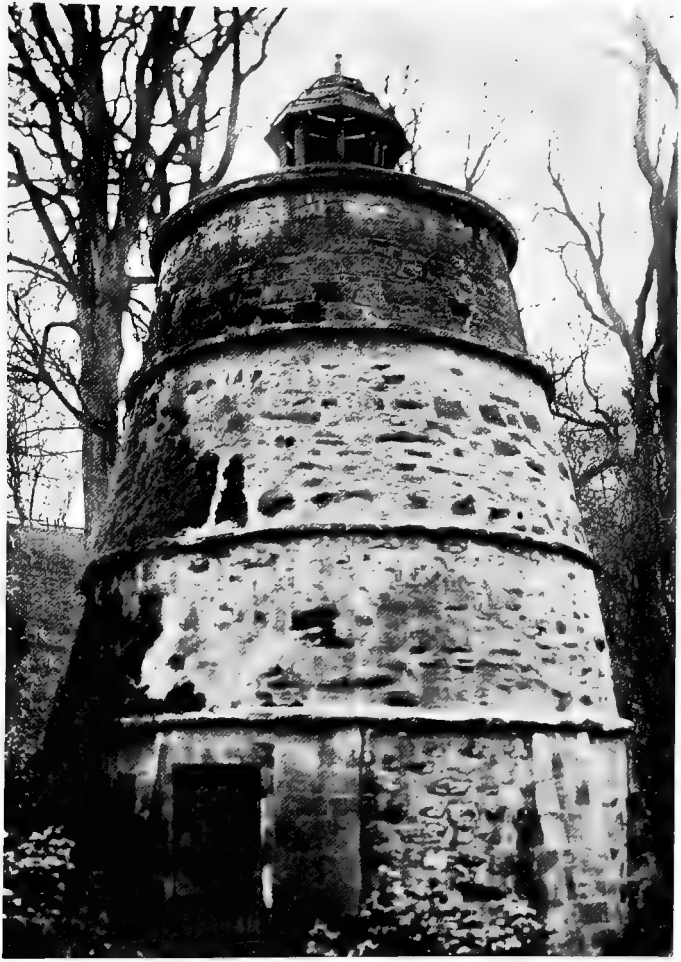
Each of the six walls, except that in which is the doorway, is broken by a tall arched dummy

window, with another one of similar shape above. The arches are rather awkwardly cut off from the main body of the windows by the string-course that runs round the walls. But the building is of striking appearance, and a small defect in the design can be excused by . . . . the unusual shape. It probably dates from the middle or latter half of the eighteenth century. It should be noticed that a potence is in place.

The second specimen is in the yard at Drumry Mains, near Drumchapel, and is a tall stone building with hipped roof. Eighteen feet square, it measures thirty to the eaves. About twelve dozen nest-holes occupy the upper story only, the room below being perhaps intended for a larder or a slaughter-house. The walls are three feet thick, the doorway large—eight feet by three.

Drumry Mains was formerly held by Paisley Abbey, and the dovecote has been stated to be seven centuries old. This is a rather liberal estimate, but the building is no doubt of ripe old age.

Turning still farther towards the west and south, we shall find that a dovecote makes part



MERTOUN HOUSE, BERWICKSHIRE

Face p. 284.

of the still remaining portion of Crossraguel Abbey, Ayrshire. It stands at an angle of the outer walls, and is of very unusual form, the main beehive-shaped structure being raised on a comparatively small round tower, partly overhung by what it carries. Inside there are about nine hundred nests.

The county of Berwick offers several dovecotes of interest. Foremost of these is that standing in the old garden of Mertoun House, near St. Boswells, for upon its lintel is carved the earliest date found on any Scottish example —1576. It is a large circular building of stone, with three string-courses, and an open centre to the roof. The height to top of walls is thirty feet, and the diameter eighteen. The buttresses have probably been added at a later date.

In the corner of a cottage garden near to Chirnside church is a circular stone dovecote sixty feet in circumference. There is a string-course half-way up the walls. Round the central opening in the vaulted roof is a spiked iron rail, evidently intended as a defence against thieves.

At Edington, a village in the Chirnside district, is a large oblong dovecote of dressed sand-

stone, with walls three feet thick, a tiled roof, and crow-stepped gables. It stands in a market garden, where may be seen some traces of a former castle.

Here, then, our present quest must end. Should this slight and imperfect survey of existing British dovecotes bring about an increase of interest in these buildings, and lead to the more careful preservation of the many which now stand, forlorn, forgotten, and neglected, up and down the land, then the chief object of this little volume will have been attained.

INDEX OF DOVECOTES DESCRIBED OR MENTIONED

INDEX OF DOVECOTES DESCRIBED OR MENTIONED

Alphabetically arranged under Counties

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Rouen (St. Ouen)
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ENGLAND AND WALES

ANGLESEA

Llaneugraid
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BERKSHIRE

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Streatley (Place Manor)

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Burnham Abbey
Clifton Reynes
Cuddington
Denham
Edlesborough (Church Farm)
Hanslope (Tathall End Farm)
Haversham
Linford, Great
Newton Longueville
Notley Abbey
Stewkley
Whitchurch

CARMARTHENSHIRE

Kidwelly (Colman Farm)

CHESHIRE

Wilmslow

CORNWALL

Crafthole
Garlenich
Trevanion
Trevena

CUMBERLAND

Aspatria
Blencowe, Great
Bootle
Bromfield (Crookdale Hall)
Bunker's Hill
Cockermouth
Corby Castle
Crofton
High Head Castle
Hutton-i'-the-Forest
Naworth Castle
Penrith
Plumbland (Parsonby Green)
Rose Castle
Wreay Hall

DENBIGHSHIRE

Holt Castle

DEVON

Buckland-tout-Saints
Powderham Castle
Pridhamsleigh, Ashburton
Stoke Rivers
Tamerton Foliot (Warleigh House)

BOOK OF DOVECOTES

DORSET

Athelhampton Hall
Bingham's Melcombe
Melplash Court
Piddletrenthide

DURHAM

Gainford

ESSEX

Bardfield, Great, near Braintree
Bocking (The Deanery)
Braxted Hall, Little
Castle Hedingham (Chelmshoe House)
Farnham (The Rectory)
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Caerphilly (The Vann)
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